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The history of the papacy

Jos. Addison Alexander.

August 5. 1858.



THE  
HISTORY  
OF  
THE PAPACY,  
TO THE  
PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION.

BY THE  
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## P R E F A C E.

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IF we were in the midst of a fog, and should ask a bystander, When did this fog begin? the answer would naturally be more or less general and vague. Should we, however, press the matter more closely, and insist upon being made acquainted with the very second of time at which the mist came on, just as we can be accurately informed of the commencement of an eclipse, our respondent, if wise, would content himself with saying that at such or such a time the atmosphere was perfectly clear, and that, therefore, the fog began at some time subsequent to that period, but at what precise second, or minute, he would not pretend to say. On the other hand, should he be unwise enough to attempt to fix the time with the required exactness, and should we afterwards receive another account of the same kind from a second

independent witness, there can be no doubt that the statements of our two informants would be found to disagree ; in all probability there would be a discrepancy of several minutes, perhaps even of a quarter of an hour.

Now, it would be a question very much like that which has been here supposed, if any one should say, When did the Papacy begin? If this question be proposed in a captious spirit, or with a view to gain advantage in argument, then the inquirer will probably ask for the precise period,—the very first year, or at least the first few years,—in which the system, hitherto unheard of, made its appearance ; and in this way it would be easy to entrap an adversary who should attempt to give a definite reply, or to make several such respondents contradict each other, so as to give some colour to an assertion that in point of fact they are all wrong,—that the Papacy did not commence at the date assigned by Protestants,—and that, therefore, as the disputant would still further conclude, the system did not take its rise at any period subsequent to the establishment of Christianity itself, but was founded when our Lord said to Simon, “ Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my



Church.” To such an inquiry, a sound and sufficient answer would be this,—I can show when the Papacy did not exist, and when the ecclesiastical atmosphere was perfectly clear, but I do not undertake to fix the exact moment at which it might have been said, The Papacy is here, in sharp contradistinction to all previous time when it might have been affirmed, It is not here.—And, accordingly, history has its use, even for the purpose of mere argument, in enabling us to give a true, but negative, reply to all questions concerning the commencement of papal usurpation.

But history does more than provide us with an answer to the sophist. It is the competent and satisfactory informant of the practical man who, being well aware of the gradual and stealthy advances of Romish aggression, desires yet to learn what were from time to time its ways and methods of progress,—what the external circumstances which formed or retarded its growth,—how it employed its opportunities, and how it overcame impediments. Apart from the religious aspects of the question, properly so called, or views of the Papacy considered as a phenomenon in the spiritual government of the great Head of the Church,—independently also, as far as

possible, of mere theological controversies, or the examination and exposure of the doctrinal errors of the Church of Rome,—and even over and above the philosophy of history, or speculation, however sound, on the social causes to which the Papacy may be referred and the principles it may serve to illustrate,—the politician or man of business requires to be put in possession of the plain facts of the papal history, the actual and palpable events by which that history has been marked, from age to age, in the course of human affairs. In this history he calls for accuracy of statement, and for information sufficiently full, combined with clearness of style and the utmost possible brevity : and, while he asks not for theories but for facts, although he does not desire a minute investigation of unnecessary details, and does not wish to find the page loaded with quotations, he is yet disposed to welcome, if not to demand, a perpetual reference to authorities and to the sources from which the substance of the narrative has been derived.

It has been my design to furnish a history of the Papacy that may meet the wants of readers such as these ;—a history, not of the Church or of Christianity at large, but simply of the Church of Rome considered

as aspiring to and obtaining pre-eminence and power, —not of the doctrines or corruptions of that Church, but of its political constitution and position, and of its tenets only so far as employed in obtaining or preserving social influence. In one word, I have endeavoured to give a plain, but sufficient, account of those events and circumstances which, under Divine permission, contributed to place or maintain ecclesiastical Rome in the position which she occupied with relation to European society and governments, during the growth of her power, and at the period of its height.

For this purpose I have availed myself chiefly of the labours of two German historians,—Schröck (J. M. Schröck, *Christliche Kirchengeschichte*, 45 vols., 8vo.), and Planck (G. J. Planck, *Geschichte der Christlich - Kirchlichen Gesellschafts - Verfassung ; Geschichte des Papstthums*, 6 vols., 12mo.),—whose histories, so far as they relate to the subject in hand, I have condensed and transfused into the following pages. Distinguished by learning and laborious research no less than by acumen and candour, these valuable works, although well known to ecclesiastical scholars, are beyond the reach of ordinary English

readers, partly on account of their voluminous bulk, and partly because they have not been translated into our language. A mere translation of these books would have been an unpromising task, if not altogether useless; but I trust that by the use to which I have applied them,—and by the occasional employment of the sources to which the writers of these works have referred, together with the incorporation of new and additional matter,—I have made at least some effectual contribution to a branch of historical knowledge which, at all times of high value, possesses in the present day a peculiar importance, and demands our most earnest attention.

J. E. R.

CHELTENHAM ;

MAY 24, 1854.

# HISTORY OF THE PAPACY.

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## CHAPTER I.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME TO CONSTANTINE  
THE GREAT.

IN the year of our Saviour's crucifixion, Rome was filled with consternation and distress arising out of the cruel proceedings of the emperor Tiberius against the real or supposed adherents of Sejanus. The massacre extended to no less than a thousand persons, of both sexes and of all ranks, whose bodies were in many instances dragged through the city and thrown into the Tiber; while not a few of the more distinguished Romans laid violent hands on themselves in order to escape this ignominious sepulture, and to secure the transmission of their property to their heirs or representatives. At that time, the affairs of Judea, as a distant province of the empire, may be supposed to have occupied about the same share of public attention at Rome as that which we should now bestow upon ordinary events occurring at some military station in India, or in any other distant part of the British dominions. The principal events of Judea were known only in general outline, and chiefly by official persons, or by individuals connected with

A. D. 34,  
Tib. 20.

civil or military offices, or employed in the province. Such private intercourse prevailed, however, to a considerable extent, commerce and other causes contributing to keep a perpetual intercommunication of ideas, and interchange of residence, between the natives of Italy and the people of the East: and hence we may readily suppose that any remarkable event which transpired in Palestine, or any tenets which became prevalent in that distant region, could not long remain unknown to at least some classes of persons at that time resident in the great capital of the world. In this manner, no doubt, a knowledge of the leading facts and doctrines of Christianity was conveyed to Rome at a very early period. It has been said, indeed, that Tiberius received from Pilate, as procurator of Judea, a report of the events which took place at the crucifixion of our Lord, couched in such terms as to induce that emperor to propose to the senate that Jesus should be added to the number of the gods; and that this proposition was rejected by the senate, avowedly from the want of adequate information, but in fact from motives of jealousy, because the application in favour of the new apotheosis had not been made directly, and in the first instance, to their own body. This narrative, which rests upon the authority of Eusebius,\* appears to be altogether incredible; and it is far more likely that the facts of the Gospel history were conveyed to Rome in the way of private information than in the form of an official report. In the year following that of our Saviour's crucifixion, Vitellius, who had been appointed governor of Syria, including Judea, sent his deputy Marcellus into that country, compelling Pilate to repair to

A. D. 35,  
Tib. 21.

\* Euseb. H. E., lib. 2, c. 2; and Chron.

Rome, to render an account of his administration; who, however, so far delayed his voyage, that he did not arrive in Rome until after the death of Tiberius. Vitellius was present in person at Jerusalem during the celebration of the Passover; at which time he bestowed various favours on the Jews, and deposed Caiaphas from the office of High Priest. We may recognise the Divine judgment in the disgrace of both Pilate and Caiaphas; but it by no means follows that either Vitellius, or the government of Rome, attached any importance to the part which these men had acted with reference to the crucifixion of Jesus.

In the year 37, while the Church was yet in its infancy at Jerusalem, Tiberius was succeeded on the imperial throne by Caius Caligula; the joy of the Romans on his accession being demonstrated by the immolation of no less than sixty thousand victims to their fancied deities; while a temple was built in honour of the new emperor, in which sacrifices of peacocks, pheasants, and other rare birds were daily offered by blind or flattering admirers. Herod Agrippa, who had been thrown into prison by Tiberius, was released by Caligula, loaded with honours, and presented with the tetrarchies of Philip and Lysanias. At Jerusalem, Vitellius received the oath of allegiance to the new emperor; and it is not improbable that, at this period of change in the government, the Sanhedrim found itself enabled to commence its active persecution of the disciples of Jesus. The Jews speedily incurred the displeasure of Caligula by resisting the order which they received to erect his statue, and to honour him with Divine worship in the temple of Jerusalem and in the synagogues of Egypt. Petronius, who had succeeded Vitellius in the govern-

A. D. 37,  
Calig. 1

A. D. 39

ment of Syria, and had been charged to enforce these measures of idolatrous worship, relented at the entreaties of the Jews, and hesitated to enforce compliance;\* but he would probably have been driven to extremities, had not the threatening letter which was addressed to him by the enraged Caligula been delayed in the course of transmission until a violent death put an end to the career of this impious tyrant. He was succeeded by Claudius, who confirmed Agrippa in the kingdom of Judea, which had been granted to him by Caligula, and also published two edicts in favour of the Jews.

A. D. 41.

These circumstances show that the attention of the imperial government was frequently directed to the affairs of Judea during the earliest years of the Christian Church; but there is nothing on the page of authentic history which may lead us to conclude that any public notice was taken at Rome of the transactions on which Christianity is founded. At the same time it is certain that a knowledge of the Gospel did reach the capital through private channels at a very early period. We learn from sacred history that "strangers of Rome" were present at Jerusalem on the celebrated day of Pentecost; and it is possible that at least some of these persons returned home as disciples of Christ, and immediately laid the foundations of a Church in their native city. The first established fact in connexion with this subject is, that, about the middle of the first century, which is the date of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, there were many Christians in the capital of the empire, whose faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world;" and from this circumstance we cannot but conclude that

\* Josephus, Ant. lib. 18, c. 11; De Bell. Jud. lib. 2, c. 17.



there must have been at Rome a Christian community almost coeval with the Churches of Jerusalem and Antioch. It has been pretended, indeed, that St. Peter visited Rome as early as the second year of Claudius (A.D. 42); but this assertion is contrary to the sacred history, which leads us to infer that St. Peter was at that time in Judea, and is at the same time inconsistent with those passages in St. Paul's Epistle (Rom. i. 11; xv. 18, 22) which strongly imply that, when he wrote, the Romans had not enjoyed the benefit of a visit from any apostle whatever.

The infancy of the Gospel in Rome appears to have been distinguished by the same characteristics as those which marked the beginning of its progress in other places. From the tenor of St. Paul's Epistle, it has been supposed that, when he wrote, Judaizing teachers had already begun to employ their efforts in corrupting the simplicity of Gospel truth; and, notwithstanding the uncertainty which rests upon the story of Simon Magus, it appears likely, on the whole, that this leader of the Gnostics was present in Rome during some part of the reign of Claudius, endeavouring to seduce the Christians by his false pretensions.\*

The emperor Claudius died by poison, A.D. 54; and was succeeded by Nero. Two years afterwards St. Paul arrived at Rome; not, as he had hoped, in the voluntary prosecution of an apostolic journey, but as a prisoner. His arrival was most welcome to the Christians of that city, some of whom went out to Appii Forum to meet him; and the method of his detention was such as to allow access to him at all times, and to leave him at liberty to preach

A. D. 56.

\* See Burton's Lectures on the Eccl. Hist. of the first three Centuries.

the Gospel.\* It appears that, at this period, Christianity had penetrated into other parts of Italy besides Rome; since the apostle, on landing at Puteoli, was saluted by Christian brethren of that place, with whom he remained seven days.

This period of the residence and preaching of St. Paul in Rome must have been highly favourable to the progress of the Gospel. It may well be supposed that many individuals were now converted to Christianity; and it cannot be doubted that the apostle's ministrations contributed to the establishment and growth of Christian principles in those who had already been numbered among the followers of Jesus. In one of the Epistles written by St. Paul during his first imprisonment at Rome, we find him expressly declaring that his situation in that place had contributed to the "furtherance of the Gospel;" and he makes distinct allusion to the saints of "Cæsar's household."† It has been supposed that he came in contact with Seneca, who was at this time living in Rome; and the conjecture that this philosopher was numbered among the apostle's converts proceeded so far as to give rise to the forgery of a pretended epistolary correspondence between them; but we know no more than the fact of their contemporary residence in the same place. The conversion of Onesimus took place at this time; and it is highly probable that an illustrious lady, Pomponia Græcina, is to be added to the list of those who were now brought by the apostle to the knowledge of the Gospel.‡ At the same time, St. Paul's place of abode in the great capital of the world became the resort of many of his

\* Acts xxviii. 30, 31.

† Phil. i. 12—14; iv. 22.

‡ Tac. Annal. 13, 32.

old friends and fellow-labourers: among whom we reckon Timothy, Tychicus, and Epaphras, from Asia Minor; Epaphroditus, from Philippi; Mark, the nephew of Barnabas; Luke, the companion of his voyage; Justus, and Demas. Such was, beyond all doubt, the nucleus of the Christian Church in Rome between the years 50 and 60; and it is exceedingly probable that the number of converts in that city was by this time very considerable.

Besides attributing to St. Paul's residence in Rome an increase of Christian knowledge, and a great impulse to the Christian life, among those who received the benefit of his ministry, we can hardly be wrong in assigning to the same period the first regular constitution of a Christian Church at Rome. In the absence of distinct information on this point, we may yet refer to the known practice of the apostle, who, according to his office, was always employed, not only in preaching the Gospel, but in setting in order the affairs of those communities by which the Gospel had been embraced. It is probable that many of the subordinate arrangements made by the apostle in different Churches varied according to peculiar circumstances, or some special exigencies; but it seems to have been his invariable practice to appoint in every Church one who should take the lead in the management of affairs after his own departure; and it is not too much to conclude that, before St. Paul quitted Rome after his release in the year 58, he appointed such presiding presbyter, or bishop, among the Christians of that city. This office he probably committed to Linus,\* who is usually spoken of by ancient ecclesiastical writers as the first bishop

\* 2 Tim. iv. 21.

of Rome after the apostles,\* and is said to have held that office until the year 67 or 68. In this case, the founder of the Church of Rome, historically speaking, was St. Paul; and when ancient writers mention St. Paul and St. Peter as joint founders of that Church, and as having conjointly appointed Linus to his office,† it is likely that the name of St. Peter was added to that of the other apostles, as having afterwards distinguished that city by his presence, and having, like St. Paul himself, received there his crown of martyrdom. It is worthy of remark that in early times a certain pre-eminence was assigned to St. Paul, as being the earlier of the two apostolic founders of the Church of Rome; so much so that, in the representations of the two apostles on the seal of the ancient Roman bishops, the figure of St. Paul stands on the right hand, having that of St. Peter to the left.

But was St. Peter ever in Rome at all? Some writers are disposed to deny the fact; but, as it appears to others, without sufficient reason. It is the opinion of the learned and candid Dr. Burton that St. Peter arrived in Rome, in company with St. Mark the Evangelist, at about the time of St. Paul's release; and he gives his reasons for thinking that here, at this time, that apostle came in collision with Simon Magus, and exposed his imposture in some effectual manner, which was afterwards recorded with the addition of a fabulous adventure.‡ It was also, perhaps, on this occasion that St. Mark wrote his Gospel. After this St. Peter left Rome; and it is not improbable that, according to ancient tradition, he preached the Gospel in Egypt.

\* Euseb. H. E. 3, 2; 5, 6.

† Irenæus adv. Hæres. 3, 2.

‡ Burton, Lecture 10.

During the reign of Nero, the number of Christians at Rome continually increased; and while they were thus rising into notice, they became exceedingly unpopular among their heathen neighbours, whose superstitions they abjured, and from many of whose practices in ordinary life they could not but revolt. At the same time, they became subject to the most atrocious calumnies; infanticide and other hideous crimes were laid to their charge; and they were regarded by their enemies as hating the whole human race. We may account for this ill fame, so thoroughly undeserved, by tracing it in some measure to wanton or malicious misrepresentation on the part of those who found themselves condemned by the superior morality and the general good conduct of their Christian neighbours; but it is also likely that, in many cases, the followers of Christ were almost unavoidably confounded with the Gnostics, whose errors appear to have become prevalent together with the progress of the Gospel, and whose lives were disgraced by many abominable practices. Certain, however, it is, that, under Nero, the Christians as a body had become exceedingly unpopular, and their very name was equivalent to a term of reproach. For some time they were not exposed to any peculiar persecutions, nor do we find that they suffered from any outbursts of popular fury. At length, however, the evil passions of the heathen population were let loose upon the unoffending, but calumniated, Christians. A large portion of the city of Rome had been destroyed by fire; and there were good grounds for attributing this fearful calamity to the wanton and licentious Nero. He endeavoured, but with little effect, to repel the charge;

A. D. 64.

nor did he succeed in allaying the popular indignation against himself, until he resorted to the cruel expedient of directing it against the innocent followers of Jesus. The calumny thus raised, like many others directed against the same party, was eagerly caught up; and speedily the desire of revenge upon the emperor was exchanged for the cry of Death to the Christians! The tyrant who had raised the cry lost no time in giving full scope to the barbarities of an infuriated populace. Guiltless as they were, the Christians were unhesitatingly accused of the crime of having set fire to the city, and were condemned to suffer the most excruciating torments. Disguised as wild beasts and thrown as a prey to dogs, crucified, or enveloped in coats of inflammable materials and made to burn as torches to shed light upon that scene of destruction of which they formed a melancholy part, the persecuted Christians perished in vast numbers, even in the emperor's own gardens, as a spectacle for the amusement of their enemies. The historian\* who relates these enormities, does not attempt to establish the truth of the accusation upon which they were founded; but his account bears witness at once to the cruelty with which the vengeance was inflicted, and to the firmness of the sufferers. He also inadvertently gives us to understand how large was the number of those whose crime consisted in their being Christians.

A. D. 66.†  
 Linus.

It does not appear from authentic history that this persecution extended beyond the boundaries of Italy,

\* Tac. Ann. 15, 44.

† There is some uncertainty about the dates of the early Roman bishops. The marginal chronology in this book follows *L'Art de Vérifier les Dates*.

or that it was of long duration. It seems to have been about this time that Linus, the first bishop of the Roman church, filled that office; and that St. Paul now came a second time to Rome, where he was speedily thrown into prison. Here Luke was again his faithful companion; Onesiphorus visited him, and showed him great kindness; Demas was with him for a time, and then forsook him, perhaps from fear of persecution. Titus and Crescens were present for a time; and then left the apostle in order to go, as it seems, in the regular discharge of their duty, the former to Dalmatia, the latter to Galatia. Not long after this second arrival of St. Paul at Rome, he appears to have been joined by St. Peter; and there seems to be no reason to call in question the account which represents both these apostles as having suffered martyrdom at Rome on the same day, after a strict confinement of some duration in the Mamertine prison at the foot of the Capitol. This event probably took place in the year 67, or at the beginning of 68. It is probable that St. Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded, and that St. Peter suffered crucifixion. Origen adds, concerning St. Peter, that he was crucified with his head downwards,\* in humble token of his sense of unworthiness to suffer in precisely the same manner as his Lord and Master: but it is impossible to say what degree of credit ought to be attached to this statement; and some think that this circumstance bears the appearance of a fictitious or ostentatious humility, little suited to the character of the apostle, or to the grave circumstances in which he was placed. In the second century, the tomb of St. Paul was pointed out on the road to Ostia, and that

\* Origen, quoted by Euseb. H. E. 3. 1.

of St. Peter on the hill of the Vatican.\* The accounts of other circumstances said to have been connected with the death of these apostles, being derived from the spurious Roman Martyrology, or from other doubtful sources, must be here passed over as wholly without foundation.

A. D. 68.  
Vespasian,  
emp.

A. D. 70  
or 72.

The cruel and profligate Nero came to a miserable end in the year 68; and, after the brief reign of Galba, and the still shorter rivalry of Otho and Vitellius, Vespasian was proclaimed emperor in the year following. His accession to the empire was marked by an event of great importance in the annals of the Christian Church,—the destruction of Jerusalem, by Titus the emperor's son. This terrible fulfilment of the Saviour's prediction took place amidst scenes of unparalleled suffering and horror, attended by a tremendous sacrifice of human life within the walls of the devoted city. The temple was no more: in a short space of time, Judea was reduced to the condition of a completely conquered province; and the Jewish polity, as it had subsisted for ages past, distinguished by its solemn religious rites and services, was at an end.

The martyrdom of St. Paul and St. Peter, and the destruction of Jerusalem, within the space of little more than two years, may be considered to mark an important epoch in the history of the Christian Church.

A. D. 78  
(al. 68).  
Cletus, or  
Anacletus.

The history of the early Roman bishops is involved in great obscurity; but it seems probable that Anacletus was appointed by St. Peter and St. Paul as the successor of Linus, and that these apostles had even provided for the future order of the Church by

\* Euseb. H. E. 2, 25.



fixing upon Clement as the successor of Anacletus, if he should survive him.

The Christians of Rome enjoyed great tranquillity throughout the reign of Vespasian, and afterwards under Titus, who succeeded his father in 79, and died in 81. After this the Church of Rome came under the superintendence of Clement, who is said to have been a companion of the apostles, and is usually regarded as having been the fellow-labourer of St. Paul mentioned in the Epistle to the Philip-  
 pians. It matters little whether or not this was the same Clement as the one to whom St. Paul refers; nor is it of any great moment whether the date of his tenure of office coincided with these two reigns, or ought to be reckoned a little later, extending even to the first or second year of the second century. Be these things as they may, Clement is of some importance to the student of early ecclesiastical history, as the author of an epistle which is the only Christian production of the first century, except the books of the New Testament, that can be deservedly accounted genuine. And in the absence of details respecting the internal affairs of the early Roman Church, it is not without interest that we discover something of the tone of feeling by which that Church was pervaded, and gain thereby a correct idea of the position which was occupied by its presiding presbyter. This epistle is in substance a fraternal message from the Christians of Rome to their brethren of Corinth, who were at that time severely suffering from internal dissensions. It is pervaded by a tone of unaffected piety, and breathes the spirit of brotherly concord and love, whilst it exhorts the Corinthians to the cultivation of the same good feeling among themselves. It consists, to a

A. D. 79-81.  
Titus, emp.

A. D. 91.  
Clement.

great extent, of quotations from the apostolical epistles and other parts of Scripture; and appeals simply to Scriptural motives and examples for the enforcement of its lessons. It is distinguished from the sacred writings of the apostles by marks of human fallibility and error, which remain even after making allowance for the interpolations by which the genuine epistle has been disfigured. Ecclesiastically, the epistle of Clement is worthy of remark, as having been written in the name of the whole Church of Rome, and addressed to the whole community at Corinth; not even mentioning Clement by name, or as the official sender of the despatch; and being in itself devoid of anything like a dictatorial spirit, or any claim of superiority or authority. It is also to be observed that Clement uses the term presbyter with reference to bishops, and affirms that the early bishops were not appointed to their office without the consent of the people.\* Other writings which have come down to us under the name of Clement are mere forgeries, and therefore do not deserve mention in this place.

A. D. 81.  
Domitian,  
emp.

Domitian succeeded Titus in the year 81. During the early part of this reign the Roman Christians appear to have remained unmolested; but afterwards they were again subject to some trying persecutions. It appears that Vespasian had already made an effort to extirpate all the descendants of David in Judea, in order to prevent the possibility of a disturbance from any pretender to the throne; and it seems that Domitian was now induced to proceed with rigour against the Christians at Rome in consequence of having received information to the effect that there

\* Capp. 42—44.

were among them some individuals who claimed descent from the royal line of Judah, and that, as a body, they expected the presence of a king among them. Some of the accused having been brought before the emperor,—evidently men of mean condition, who explained their views concerning the spiritual nature of the Redeemer's kingdom, and declared their expectation of the second coming of Christ at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead,—it is said that Domitian dismissed them with mingled feelings of pity and contempt, and ceased to prosecute measures of violence against those from whom he was persuaded he had nothing to fear. During this brief persecution, which lasted only about two years (from 93 to 95 or 96), several persons of high rank appear to have been involved in suffering. Flavius Clemens, an uncle of the emperor, who had been consul in the preceding year,\* together with his wife Domitilla, are reckoned among the martyrs and confessors of this reign. The charges preferred against the Christians were those of atheism (*i. e.* refusing to join in the idolatrous national worship),—participation in Jewish rites and ceremonies (Christians being confounded with the Jews),—and, as in the case of Flavius Clemens, intolerable indolence, or the neglect of public affairs (the Christians refusing to take part in business which could not be conducted without their being present at heathen sacrifices). We thus incidentally learn some practices in the general conduct and bearing of the Roman Christians towards the end of the first century; and we are led also to infer that the members of the Church, at that period, included persons of all ranks, from the highest to the

\* Dio Cassius, Hist. Rom., lib. 67. Sueton. Domit. 15.

lowest, from the man of consular dignity to the mechanic and day-labourer.

A. D. 96-98.  
Nerva, emp.

The short reign of Nerva (96-98) was doubtless a period of profound tranquillity to the members of the Roman Church; and there is reason to suppose that many Christians availed themselves of the edict of this emperor, by which he recalled all exiles from banishment. It is expressly recorded,\* that Nerva did not allow any one to be prosecuted for the alleged crime of irreligion, or for adherence to Judaism; that is to say, in effect, he proclaimed toleration to the Christians. Perhaps we shall hardly be wrong if we regard this as the most flourishing period of the Roman Church: the faith of its members had been tried and purified by several persecutions; the doctrine of the Gospel existed among them in all its native simplicity;† the number of converts was considerable; and there was now full scope for the development of the Christian life; while all believers were permitted to exercise their gifts and to extend their influence, no man making them afraid. Thus peacefully closed the first century upon the Christians of Rome.

At this period the apostle St. John was still alive, and presided over the Church at Ephesus; Ignatius was bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp of Smyrna. All the writings of the New Testament, unless we except some portion of those by St. John, were in possession of the Churches; nor had any confusion arisen between the writings of inspired men and forged or apocryphal books. It is probable that extraordinary spiritual gifts were still possessed, and miraculous works performed, by those who had re-

\* Dio Cassius, lib. 68, 1.

† Burton, Lecture 12.

ceived these powers from the apostles; and it seems reasonable to admit the testimony of ancient writers, who affirm that there was only a gradual cessation of miracles in the Christian Church in proportion to the diminution of the number of survivors among those to whom the apostles had conveyed extraordinary powers by the laying on of hands. It was the peculiar prerogative of the apostles to impart the power of working miracles; when this power was once bestowed upon any believer it seems to have remained with him to the end of life, but he could not propagate it, or occasion its continuance in the Church after his decease.

Trajan ascended the throne in the year 98. Some suppose that Clement was at this time bishop of the Roman Church, and that he died two years afterwards, when he was succeeded by Evaristus. Others, however, assign the death of Clement to the latter part of the reign of Domitian. The chronology of the Roman bishops about this period is unsettled, but the order of their succession, as given by Eusebius, is generally admitted as correct: although Platina, Baronius, and Pagi suppose the existence of another bishop, and give the order of succession as follows—Linus, Cletus, Clement, Anacletus, Evaristus.

A. D. 98  
Trajan,  
emp.

A. D. 100.  
Evaristus.

It is, perhaps, worthy of remark, that the whole list of Roman bishops to the time of Constantine is distinguished by the prevalence of Greek names: and since it appears, upon examination, that very many of these names are such as were at this period more or less common among the servile population in Rome, we have herein probably an indication of the fact that the majority of the early Roman bishops

were of plebeian origin ; and hence we may conclude, still further, that the greater number of Christians, by whom these bishops were chosen, continued for some time to belong to the lower classes of society, although, as has been already noticed, some persons of more illustrious birth had already joined their ranks.

Under Trajan, the sufferings of Christians at Rome on account of their religion appear to have been partial, and perhaps but slight. They were not exposed to any systematic persecution on the part of the government ; while yet they enjoyed no efficient protection against the tyranny of subordinate magistrates, or the effect of popular odium. Persecution appears to have been more violent in the eastern part of the empire, especially during the latter part of this reign ; of which we find evident traces in the celebrated letter of Pliny to Trajan ; in the martyrdom of Symeon, bishop of Jerusalem ; and especially in that of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, who, by the emperor's own orders, was taken to Rome, and exposed to death by wild beasts in the amphitheatre.

A. D. 107.

On his journey to Rome, Ignatius addressed a letter to the Church in that city ; not to the bishop, but, as in the case of the epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, to the Church, without any mention of its president or other presbyters. It has been remarked that the comparative freedom of the Church of Rome from the assaults of Gnosticism at this time may be inferred from the circumstance that Ignatius makes no mention of the Gnostic errors in his epistle to Rome, while he writes strongly on this subject to other Churches which he addressed in the course of the same journey. The death of Ignatius must have occasioned a great sensation among the Roman Christians ;

and it may well be supposed that they derived no inconsiderable confirmation in faith and piety from the tone of his truly Christian epistle, and afterwards by witnessing his fidelity even unto death.

It appears to have been about this time that Evaristus was succeeded by Alexander as bishop of the Roman Church; who died, after having held his office during the space of ten years, and was followed by Xystus, or Sixtus.

A. D. 109.  
Alexander.

A. D. 119.  
Xystus, or  
Sixtus I.

Trajan died in 117. The latter portion of his reign had been distinguished by an extensive insurrection of the Jews in Egypt and Cyrene; and it is not unlikely that the turbulent disposition of that people, and the troubles which they occasioned in various parts of the empire, made an impression unfavourable to the Christians upon the mind of his successor Hadrian. The beginning of this reign, however, is not to be regarded as an era of persecution in Rome; while yet it is possible that occasional cruelties towards the Christians were exercised at the instigation of the priests and people, as in the case of the alleged martyrdom of Symphosa and her seven sons, said to have been put to death upon their refusing compliance with a demand to offer sacrifice to the heathen gods at the dedication of the emperor's villa near Tivoli. A letter of Hadrian to Minucius Fundanus, on the affairs of the Christians, was more favourable to their safety than that of Trajan to Pliny. By this it was declared necessary that some positive violation of the laws should be proved against a Christian before he could be put to death. But a law which was passed (about 129), under the title of the *Perpetual Edict*, to the effect that all cities and towns of the empire should follow the laws and cus-

A. D. 117.  
Hadrian,  
emp.

toms of Rome, appears to have been brought to bear with great severity upon the Christians in several places.

A. D. 127.  
Telesphorus

It was now, and perhaps had been for some time past, the practice of the Christians of Rome to repair for concealment to the catacombs in the neighbourhood of that city. Here they sheltered themselves from the dangers or sufferings of persecution; here they celebrated divine worship; and here they buried their dead.

The reign of Hadrian was distinguished by the appearance of the first written Defences or Apologies in favour of Christianity, two of which (by Quadratus and Aristides) were presented to the emperor when on a visit to Athens, about the year 125. And it is remarkable that, while Christian writers began to defend their religion by an appeal to reason and argument, it began to be deemed needful by its enemies to have recourse to other weapons than fire and sword for the extirpation of the rapidly-increasing faith. It was now that Celsus, a heathen philosopher, composed his treatise against the Gospel. All this tends to show that, as the number of Christians increased, so their tenets and customs were becoming more extensively known, and were exciting attention among the masses of the heathen world.

But here we are painfully reminded of the fact that, at this early period of Christian history, there had arisen a departure from that perfect simplicity of faith and manners in the bosom of the infant Church which continued, as we have reason to hope, until after the beginning of this century. During the reign of Hadrian, and some time before Celsus wrote, well-meaning, but mistaken, men employed their



learning and ingenuity in the production of literary frauds with a design of promoting the cause of the Gospel. This was the case, in a remarkable manner, and perhaps in the first instance, with regard to the spurious or interpolated Sibylline verses. Taking advantage of the respect paid by the heathen to the celebrated prophecies of the Sibyls, which had probably received from time to time various changes or additions to suit the purposes of priests or other interested persons, some Christian writers of the reign of Hadrian produced and brought into circulation a new set or new edition of these verses, containing express and startling prophecies of the coming and work of Christ;—prophecies in form, but, in fact, a series of narratives compiled from the history of the New Testament. It appears that some Christians of that period were able to detect this imposture, and were wholly unwilling to lend countenance to so unwarrantable a method of attempting to commend the Gospel to the notice of the heathen. Others, however, and perhaps many, received the verses as genuine; we find that Christian apologists and teachers appealed to them, in all sincerity, as such; and they were highly esteemed in the Church for many centuries after the date of their publication.

Apoeryphal Gospels and other forgeries had been in existence from, perhaps, the beginning of the second century, if not from a still earlier date; but these proceeded from Gnostics, or from some other parties who sought to pervert the truth of Christianity; and therefore no Christians, properly so called, were chargeable with the crime and folly of these productions. But, since the Sibylline verses do not appear to have been designed for the promotion

of any purpose distinct from the general advancement of the Gospel among the heathen population, and since they were eagerly adopted by its professed defenders, it seems impossible to doubt that we have here a clear instance of a pious fraud, executed by some intelligent and educated member of the Church, before the expiration of the first quarter of the second century. Here is an early instance—perhaps the earliest tangible instance—of the corrupt practice of attempting to compass a good Christian end by bad and unchristian means—of the employment of unholy weapons in the holy war. The publication of this forgery, viewed in connexion with the early date of the transaction, seems to merit especial attention. It is not too much to say that no such instance of dishonesty could have been found among the Roman Christians in the days of Nero or of Domitian; but it was found in the time of Hadrian. And whatever may be our idea of the zeal or the good intentions which prompted this ingenious device, we cannot but regard it as a proof that, amongst the great numbers of men who now professed the Gospel, including not a few of the noble and the learned, there was a leaven of that worldly wisdom or crooked policy which, as we all know, the Gospel does not sanction, and which, as Celsus informs us, had been hitherto repudiated by the great body of the followers of Jesus. The fine gold had already begun to grow dim.

Other forgeries and pious frauds of this kind succeeded, and were extant in no inconsiderable number before the close of the second century. Their origin may be traced to various causes. Some were written, as we have seen, for the defence or credit of the Gospel among the heathen; others with a view to

recommend or gain currency for certain opinions or observances, by the supposed sanction of great and venerated names; others to satisfy the morbid curiosity of some Christians in those days who were desirous to obtain minute information concerning the lives and labours of the apostles, and other events connected with the earliest times of the Gospel; and others again were composed in order to gain attention to some established and true doctrine by a novel method of announcing it, or to obtain a favourable reception for some new phase of doctrine, or some particular dogma of an individual teacher. There is no doubt that the majority of these spurious writings are to be ascribed to the aberrations of a misguided zeal; of which we have a specimen in the case of a Christian presbyter, who, when asked why he had propagated the fictitious Acts of Paul and Thecla, replied that he did so out of love to the holy apostle.\* In this case, however, the practice was viewed in its true light by the contemporary members of the Church, and its author was justly regarded as guilty of a misdemeanour. We must also bear in mind that the doctrines of the new Platonists found acceptance with many Christians towards the close of the second century; and it is more than probable that too many persons imbibed from this source the maxim which had long since been taught by Pythagoras and Plato, that it is lawful to employ falsehood in the service of truth. We must not overlook these things while we apply ourselves to the study of the Christian mind, and the consequent history of the Christian Church. Here is the introduction of alloy, or rather of a leaven which speedily began to work

\* Tertull. de Baptismo, c. 17.

with deleterious effect. We do not yet find any instances of that gross abuse of the Gospel by which men make it subservient to their passions or their worldly interests; but we have detected something more than a mere error of judgment; we have observed a positive departure from the high standard of pure Christian principles, in a mode of recommending the Gospel and of attempting to serve the interests of religion, which had been adopted, very probably, with an earnest desire for the propagation of truth. And it may be well to ask, what kind of conversions must have been those which were effected by this unworthy means? It is probable that the artifice of forgery was, to a certain extent, successful, and that some persons at least may have been won over to a profession of Christianity by the imposing appearance of the Sibylline verses; but is it not more than likely that such conversions were very superficial? Was not that degree of unsoundness in the Christian Church, which led to the putting forth of falsified documents, adapted to increase the disease of the spiritual body by attaching to it many ill-taught and unworthy members?

There is a prevalent idea that all was pure within the borders of the Church during the first three centuries; and especially it is supposed that, during the era of persecutions, and within so short a space of time from the ministry of our Saviour and his apostles, the Christian community was a model of perfection in doctrine and discipline, in the spiritual life, and in uncorrupted morals. But we must listen to the voice of history in this matter—a matter which, as will hereafter appear, is by no means foreign from the subject now before us.

Upon the death of Hadrian, in 138, Antoninus A. D. 138.  
Antoninus  
Pius, emp. Pius began his peaceful and prosperous reign. Under his mild government the Christians enjoyed, not indeed uninterrupted tranquillity, but, to say the least, a considerable respite from suffering. The emperor himself bore willing testimony to their good conduct; nor could he, as a philosopher, withhold from them the commendation of sincere and personal piety: and although he appears to have been unable to extend to them all the protection which he desired, it is yet certain that, from time to time, he employed his efforts to secure them from molestation.

It was about this time, either in the first year of Antoninus, or four years earlier, that Telesphorus, bishop of Rome, who appears to have succeeded Xystus about the year 127, suffered martyrdom.\* The authority of Irenæus is thought sufficient to establish the fact; but we have no authentic history of the circumstances which led to this event. It has been conjectured that occasion might have been taken of the games which were celebrated on the emperor's accession to gratify the populace by a temporary exhibition of cruelty towards the Christians; but we know no more than that Telesphorus is the first of the Roman bishops to whom Irenæus assigns the honour of having sealed his testimony with his blood.

Telesphorus was succeeded by Hyginus. A. D. 139.  
Hyginus. During his episcopate—that is to say, between the years 139 and 142—the Church of Rome was disturbed by the presence of Valentinius and Cerdon, two celebrated leaders of the Gnostics. It is not improbable, on the one hand, that some Christians may have been misled

\* Eusebius, H. E. 4, 10: after Irenæus, 3, 3, 3. Also, Chronicon, (in which he gives the earlier date).

by their false doctrines; and, on the other, that their licentious tenets and practices may have contributed, however undeservedly, to increase the odium of the Christian name among the heathen. Marcion, another distinguished Gnostic, was engaged in spreading his errors in Rome a few years afterwards.

A. D. 142.  
Pius.

Hyginus was succeeded by Pius, as bishop of the Roman Church, in the year 142. A brother of Pius, named Hermas, was the author of a book called "The Shepherd"—a work which was favourably received by the Roman Christians on account of its sentiments of piety and devotion, and considered worthy of private perusal for the purpose of edification, while yet it was not admitted to the honour of being publicly read in their assemblies as though it were the work of a sacred writer.\* In after ages it was regarded as the work of Hermas who is mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans (xvi. 14), and was received as little, if at all, inferior to the sacred Scriptures. There was, however, no such confusion in the minds of those Christians among whom it was first published; they appear to have regarded "The Shepherd" of Hermas simply as an instructive fiction, and to have received it in about the same manner as we now receive and read the "Pilgrim's Progress." And, accordingly, there is a value belonging to this book as giving us an insight into the state of religious taste and sentiment among the Christians at Rome in the middle of the second century. The imperfections and mystical ideas of a book written by the brother of a Roman bishop, and well received by the Church over which he presided,

\* Mosheim, de Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum, Cent. 1, § 54.

point to an amount of infirmity and error in the Christian mind, which, while it had not yet interfered with any of the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, yet cannot but be viewed with some degree of apprehension as involving much danger, or as likely, at least, to pave the way for evil. The state of things was undoubtedly worse in after times, when this book was received and venerated as the work of an "apostolical father;" but still we cannot fail to lament some features in the condition of the age which produced it.\*

It is probable that about this period the disorders consequent upon the introduction of Gnostic errors among the Christians of Rome drew down upon the whole Church the infliction of great sufferings on account of their religion. Certain it is that the Church was now exposed to some measure of persecution, for the mitigation of which Justin Martyr drew up his first Apology, and presented it to the emperor, at Rome, in the year 148. In this work we have a pleasing and satisfactory account of the faith, worship, and morals of contemporary Christians; and it gives us full warrant to conclude that, whatever imperfections in taste or feeling may have been betrayed by the reception of such works as "The Shepherd" of Ilermas, there was yet in the Church a distinct perception of Gospel truth, and a devout submission to its influence upon the heart and life. The public teaching of the Church had not yet been corrupted, and the conduct of those who had not been perverted by the Gnostics was still blameless. Christian worship was conducted with primitive simplicity; and the possession of anything like papal power by the

\* Burton, Lect. 19.

presiding presbyter of the Roman Church had not as yet been imagined. It is perhaps somewhat remarkable that none of the early Apologies or Defences were written by a bishop of Rome, or in his name.

A. D. 157.  
Anicetus.

Pius died in the year 157; and the presidency of his successor Anicetus was marked with an event of which we have received an authentic\* account that bears directly and strongly on the question concerning the position and claims of the bishops of Rome at this early period.

A. D. 158.

About the year 158, Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who had held his office from the beginning of the century, visited Rome, and had a conference with Anicetus concerning a difference which existed between the Eastern and Western Churches as to the time of celebrating the paschal festival, or Easter. From the earliest ages of the Gospel, all Christians had observed the annual custom of eating a lamb in commemoration of the death of Christ. But they differed as to the day on which this custom was ob-

\* Mr. Shepherd, in his "History of the Church of Rome to the End of the Episcopate of Damasus," recently published, casts doubt upon this narrative, in common with other portions of early church history, and the genuineness of writings ascribed to Cyprian. On these points I refer the reader to Mr. Shepherd's history itself, with his Letters to Dr. Maitland. It is no part of the plan of the present work to investigate questions of criticism; the facts of history are here stated as they have been recorded in works of hitherto undoubted authority. It is the opinion of Mr. Shepherd that, before the Council of Nicaea, the Roman bishops, beyond their mere names, are unknown to genuine history. "Truth," says he, "has recorded nothing of Rome's earlier centuries" (p. 71). He believes that there is no true record of any interference of the Roman prelate in the affairs of other churches during the first four centuries; but that, during that period, "the bishop of Rome was entirely confined to his own province, and that there is not even a shadow of proof that he was regarded as invested with any power that was not equally possessed by any other metropolitan; and that the story of Peter is of a more recent date" (p. 124).



served. The Christians of Asia Minor ate their lamb on the fourteenth day of the first Hebrew month, Nisan,—that is to say, on the fourteenth day after the new moon in March, the day on which the Jews ate their paschal lamb. This they did without any reference to the day of the week; and on the third day following they celebrated the festival of the Resurrection; alleging as their authority for this practice the sanction of the apostles John and Philip. The western Churches, at the same time, observed Easter day, or the festival of the Resurrection, on the *Sunday after* the fourteenth day of Nisan, and they ate their commemorative lamb on the evening before that day; being supported in this custom, as they affirmed, by the instructions of St. Peter and St. Paul.\* It is possible that herein both parties were right. One apostle may have appointed one day for this observance in one Church, and another may have fixed or approved of another day in a different community; for these inspired master-builders never required or sought to establish uniformity of rites and ceremonies among various Churches.† And it is clear that the difference in the time of observing Easter had all along existed without occasioning any misunderstanding between the Churches of the east and west.‡ Nor did the discussion of this subject give rise to any breach of friendship on the present occasion. Anicetus urged Polycarp to adopt the western custom, and Polycarp in turn endeavoured to induce Anicetus to fall in with what he deemed the better custom of the eastern Churches; but neither party succeeded in convincing the other of the propriety of making any

\* Mosheim, de Rebus Christianorum ante Constantin. sec. 2. §. 71.

† See Socrates, H. E. 5, 22.

‡ Euseb. H. E. 5, 24.

change. They parted, however, as they had met, on terms of true Christian amity, having partaken together of the holy communion, and Anicetus having caused his brother Polycarp to consecrate the elements in the presence of his Church. In this case Anicetus of Rome made no claim of a right to dictate or command; he was still in his true position as the bishop of his own Church; and it does not appear that the idea had yet been started that the bishop of Rome should ever assume any authority over the members of a foreign community.

But, while we observe that there was in this matter no assumption of authority on the part of Rome, we must note this early effort at uniformity in a ceremonial observance on the part of two distinct Churches. The difference had existed from apostolic times; but we do not learn that until now it had been ever a subject of debate. We cannot but infer that, at the period at which we have now arrived, a greater stress was laid upon externals than that which had been attached to them a hundred years before. It is, however, satisfactory to know that there still existed among the various Churches from east to west that agreement in the faith which must always find place among those who have recourse to one and the same rule of faith, contained in the sacred Scriptures. Hegesippus, an oriental Christian, fragments of whose Ecclesiastical History are preserved by Eusebius, undertook a journey to Rome in the time of Anicetus. He tells us that he conversed with the bishops of many Churches on his way; and that he heard the same doctrine from them all. More particularly, he mentions the state of the Church of Corinth, which, as we have already seen, had been sadly disturbed by

internal dissensions; and he bears decided testimony to the fact that this Church continued to maintain the true faith, or, to use his own words, that it persevered in the right confession.\*

Antoninus died in the year 161, and was succeeded by Aurelius and Verus as joint emperors; the latter of whom died in 169, leaving Aurelius sole emperor. During this reign Justin Martyr wrote his second Apology; from which we learn that the Christians of Rome had recently been exposed to persecution, notwithstanding the existing edict in their favour. Not long after, Justin himself was put to death for no other crime than confessing himself a Christian and refusing to offer sacrifice to the gods. It appears, however, that some degree of favour was shown to the Christians in the early part of this reign, inasmuch as a law was passed by which they were permitted, under certain restrictions, to hold office in the State.† But persecution appears to have been very general, both at Rome and in the East, a little after the middle of the second century.

Anicetus was succeeded by Soter, as bishop of the Roman Church, probably in the year 168. Soter is said to have written a treatise against the Montanists, whose fanaticism and austerities may probably have by this time occasioned some disorder among the Christians of Rome. More certain it is that Soter addressed a letter of friendly counsel to the Church at Corinth, which was at that time governed by Dionysius, who himself was distinguished as a writer of many such catholic and paternal epistles to various Churches in Greece and Asia Minor. The letter of

\* Euseb. II. E. 4, 22.

† Dig. l. 50, tit. 2, 3. De Decurionibus.

A. D. 161.  
Aurelius  
and Verus,  
emp.

A. D. 169.  
Aurelius,  
sole emp.

(A. D. 165.)

A. D. 168.  
Soter.

Soter was kindly acknowledged by Dionysius, who took occasion to commend the Christians of Rome for their hospitality, and for their charitable succour of distressed brethren in foreign parts. He assures the Church of Rome that the epistle sent by Soter should be publicly read in their churches on the Lord's day, as they continued to read that which had been formerly received from Clement. Dionysius bitterly complains that his epistle was sadly interpolated and corrupted during his own lifetime.\* In this case there was no assumption of any peculiar authority by the bishop of Rome; for, if the fact of sending an hortatory epistle to another bishop should be supposed to indicate primacy, the appearance would be altogether in favour of Dionysius, whose epistles of this kind appear to have been far more numerous than those of any other bishop of his age in Christendom.

About this time (A.D. 174) the emperor, having undertaken an expedition against the Marcomanni and Quadi, and having suffered a severe defeat, was reduced with his whole army to the greatest distress, his troops being ready to perish with thirst, and being completely hemmed in by the victorious enemy. Suddenly the Roman army was relieved by a copious shower of rain, while a storm of hail, with thunder and lightning, harassed the enemy, and gave the Romans an advantage which led to a decisive victory. This event was afterwards represented by Christian writers as a miraculous interposition of the Almighty, in answer to the prayers of a Christian Legion in the emperor's army, said to have thence received its denomination of the Thundering Legion. This account, however, does not rest upon evidence sufficient

\* Euseb. H. E. 4, 23.

to challenge our assent; nor does it appear to have become prevalent at the time in which the event occurred. Doubtless, the Christians who might on that occasion have formed part of the Roman army would not fail to offer up supplications for deliverance to Him who alone can hear and answer prayer; while at the same time their heathen comrades were probably appealing to those who are no gods. And it is more than possible that the extraordinary relief unquestionably afforded to the army in distress was really sent in answer to the prayers of devout Christian men. Still, even if this were so, and if the Christians of Rome thankfully regarded the rain and tempest as having been obtained by the supplications of their brethren, there is yet no reason to believe that the fact was open to the observation of the heathen, or that either the emperor or his people ascribed their deliverance to such a cause. We do not find that any additional credit was attached to the Christian name about this period; on the contrary, a severe persecution arose at Lyons and Vienne in Gaul in the year 177, during which many Christians were put to death amidst excruciating sufferings, and the aged Pothinus, the first bishop of the Church at Lyons, died in prison.

Soter was succeeded by Eleutherus in 177. While persecution was yet raging at Lyons, a letter was sent from that Church,\* by Irenæus, who was then a presbyter in its community, to some of the Churches in Asia Minor, and another to Eleutherus, with a view to the establishment of peace and concord, which had been disturbed, most probably, by discussions consequent upon the spread of Montanist doctrines. According to the

A. D. 177.  
Eleutherus.

\* Euseb. H. E. 5. 3. 4.

views of some Romish writers, this letter from Lyons was nothing less than an appeal to the bishop of Rome as the sovereign pontiff for the exercise of his authority in quelling disorders in the East. Valesius says,\* “Since the primacy in all ecclesiastical affairs belonged to the Roman bishop, it was right on the part of the Lyonese to refer this controversy to his decision; being earnestly desirous that, by the authority of the Roman bishop, which was always supreme in the Church, the dissensions which had arisen in Asia might be appeased, and peace restored.” It would indeed be a weighty testimony to the early existence of something like the papacy, if it could be shown that, in the year 177, the Churches of Gaul on the one side, and those of Asia on the other, considered themselves bound to submit to the dictates of the bishop of Rome. All, however, that appears on the face of ancient history amounts to this, that the bishop of Rome, like other bishops, both received and wrote paternal epistles containing admonitions to peace. “The imprisoned confessors of Lyons wrote letters,” says Eusebius, “to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia, and also to Eleutherus who was then bishop of the Romans, making entreaties for the peace of the Church; and these letters,” he tells us, “were subjoined to an epistle in which the brethren of Gaul declared their own pious and very orthodox judgment concerning the matter in debate.”† From Tertullian it appears that the bishop of Rome at first sent into Asia a letter of like pacific tenor, containing a recognition of the prophetic gifts of Montanus and others; which, upon the representation of Praxeas, he was

\* Vales. not. ad Euseb. in loco. Baronius ad An. 179.

† Euseb. H. E. 5, 3.

afterwards induced to recal.\* In this authentic history there appears no assumption of authority on the part of Eleutherus; he merely concurs with the Church of Lyons so long as he finds it right to do so. He is still no more than the bishop of an independent Church. It is possible, indeed, that the Churches of Gaul may have been already willing to concede to the Church of Rome a kind of precedence of which we shall soon find evident traces; but there is no proof of such fact in the record itself, and we only contribute to falsify history if we consent to antedate its announcements. For aught we know, Pothinus would have been unwilling to employ language which was adopted by his successor Irenæus; and Irenæus himself, before he visited Rome, may have had other sentiments concerning the mutual relations of Churches than those which he afterwards entertained.

Marcion, a leader of the Gnostics, who had been extruded from communion with the Church, and afterwards readmitted, was finally expelled by Eleutherus, together perhaps with Valentinus, another of their teachers.

During the reign of Commodus, who succeeded Marcus Aurelius in 180, the Christians of Rome were comparatively free from suffering; and we find painful indication of a greater or less corruption of morals within the Christian Church, when we read that favour was extended to the Church through the instrumentality of Marcia, a Christian by profession, but, in a criminal sense, the mistress of the emperor. In better days such a woman would not have been permitted to remain in communion with the Church;

A. D. 180.  
Commodus,  
emp.

\* Tertull. adv. Prax., quoted by Valesius. Others suppose that the bishop who wrote this letter was Victor.

but now, towards the latter part of the second century, it appears that she was still recognised as a member of the spiritual body, while she exercised in its favour that influence which she unlawfully possessed at the emperor's court. Doubtless the body of Christians, at this time, was very considerable; and it is more than probable that during the last half century, or for a still longer period, the accession of large numbers to the Church had gradually loosened the bands of discipline, and had materially tended to lower the general tone of Christian morals.

And now, in the reign of Commodus, about a hundred and fifty years after our Saviour's ascension, we begin to find in the records of authentic history some traces, not indeed of the papacy itself, but of what may fairly be regarded as the germs of papal influence and power. There is a celebrated passage in the writings of Irenæus which bears this aspect. This passage has been often quoted in support of claims with which it has nothing to do; but, at the same time, when duly weighed according to its historical value, it does seem to show that at this period the Church of Rome was regarded with peculiar respect by some other Churches of the west, and was considered as entitled to a kind of influential precedence. Irenæus, as we have seen, had visited Rome on his way from Gaul to Asia Minor, as the bearer of a pacificatory epistle to the Churches in that country, leaving another epistle with Eleutherus as the head of the Roman Church. Upon his return from Asia Minor, he was appointed to succeed Pothinus, as bishop of the Church at Lyons; and it was while he held that office that he appears to have written his well-known work against the Gnostics, entitled a Refutation of

A. D. 177.

About  
A. D. 180.



Knowledge falsely so called. It is in this work that the passage in question occurs.

The Gnostics, whose doctrines are not to be found in Scripture, had maintained that none could properly understand the sense of Scripture who were not also acquainted with certain unwritten traditions, supposed to have come down from the times of the apostles, and regarded as supplemental to the sacred record, and explanatory of its meaning;—an assertion first made by these false teachers, and afterwards employed with mischievous effect by those who have professed themselves members of the true Church. In answer to this line of argument, at once novel and unsound, Irenæus not only insisted on the sufficiency and the paramount authority of Scripture, but, in order to meet his adversaries on their own ground, he proceeded to contend that, if there had been any such traditions as the Gnostics pretended, we might have expected to find them especially in those Churches which had been planted by apostles, and which had, in fact, handed down by tradition the truths which the apostles taught. These truths, however, are found to be simply identical with Scripture; they are neither more nor less than the same things which are recorded in the writings of evangelists and apostles. For his own part, Irenæus was satisfied with the written word; but, in order to meet the views of those who were disposed to affix an especial value to that oral tradition of apostolic doctrine, which, to a certain extent, may have continued to exist in that early period of the Church, he affirms that such tradition, in Churches where it was most likely to be found, was in perfect harmony with the written tradition, and therefore did not lend any

support to the errors of the Gnostics. "All persons," says he, "who are desirous to come to a knowledge of the truth, may discover in every Church, [observe, not only in the Church of Rome, but in every Church] the tradition of the apostles, which [has been preserved to the present time, and] is published throughout the world. We can enumerate the bishops who were appointed by the apostles themselves and their successors, to our own days; and we find that none of them ever taught or recognised any of the follies maintained by these heretics. If the apostles had been aware of any secret mysteries, to be imparted separately and privately to the perfect, they would have especially committed them to those men to whom they intrusted the care of the Churches themselves; [observe again, not to the bishops of Rome, or of any Church in particular, but to all and every one whom they appointed to preside over the Churches in any part of the world.] But there were no such traditions to be found in the apostolical and most ancient Churches, and therefore it was to be presumed that none such ever existed, and that the whole system of the Gnostics was false." Such is the line of this writer's argument; and in pursuing it he immediately subjoined the passage which, to say the least, especially when we consider the use which has been made of it, is full of interest to every calm inquirer in our branch of history. "Since, however," continues he, "it would be too long in such a volume as this to enumerate the successions of all the Churches [that is, the lists of bishops who had successively governed those Churches], we as it were take all together (*confundimus omnes*) while we declare the tradition of that Church which is at once the

largest, the most ancient, and universally known, and which was founded and constituted by the two most illustrious apostles, Peter and Paul,—a tradition which it has received from the apostles,—the faith which has been preached to mankind, and which has come down to us by an unbroken succession of bishops. By this we put to shame all persons, who, in any way whatever, either from self-love, or in a spirit of vainglory, or through their own blindness and perverse principles, deduce unwarranted conclusions. [*i. e.* broach false doctrines]. For every Church, that is to say, the faithful of all parts, must of necessity [*i. e.*, it may be taken for granted that they will] repair to [or coincide with, *convenire ad*] this Church, by reason of its higher antiquity [which seems to be the correct translation of the words “*propter potio-rem principalitatem,*”]—a Church in which the apostolical tradition has always been preserved by those who are of all parts,”\* [*i. e.*, perhaps by those Christians who from time to time have visited it from all parts of the world; meaning that Rome, being the seat of empire, had the advantage of a perpetual influx of people from every quarter, and that hence the Christians of that city, from the very first, had been enabled to compare the doctrines which had been delivered to themselves with those which had been received by their distant brethren in a great variety of places].

This passage is somewhat obscure, and possibly corrupt, existing as it does only in a miserable Latin translation of the original Greek, which has been unfortunately lost; but, as we cannot prove it to have

\* Iren. adv. Hæres. lib. 7, c. 30. See Mosheim, *De Rebus Christianorum*, sec. 2, § 21.

been falsified, we are bound to take it as it stands. It may be regarded, indeed, as containing only the private sentiments of Irenæus himself, who may, perhaps, have imbibed unusual sentiments concerning the importance of the Roman Church during his visit to the capital, and who presided over a poor and persecuted Church, which might probably have occasion to look for help and assistance to its more flourishing and wealthy neighbour;—but still it must be admitted that even the single opinion of such a man is entitled to some weight in our present inquiry. And it is our business to estimate aright the testimony which is here presented to us. Irenæus mentioned the Church of Rome in this instance, not because the testimony of other independent Churches, singly taken, was not entitled to credit, nor because it would not have been sufficient for his purpose, but, as he himself says, for the sake of brevity. Writing at Lyons, and combating the errors of many who had made Rome a chief seat of their false teaching, he may be supposed to have had regard especially to the Churches of the West, of which that of Rome was undoubtedly the largest. He gives honour to the Roman Church, not merely on account of its accidental advantage, but also, and indeed chiefly, as having continued faithful to the truth, having to that day taught the pure doctrines of the Gospel and no other. But, in thus declaring his respect for that Church, as a faithful witness of the truth in that particular age of the world, he does not lead us to suppose that he would have continued to hold her in the same estimation at any subsequent period, when her teaching may have ceased to be in full accordance with Scripture;—when, like the Gnostics themselves,

she may have superadded corrupting traditions to the words of eternal life. He argues simply from the existing fact; but if, with the Scriptures in our hands, we can prove that the fact exists no longer, then the claims of Irenæus, on this ground, cease to challenge at our hands any respect for Rome. Besides this, Irenæus refers to the Church of Rome on account of its extent, and its central position, as being in the capital of the empire; not only or chiefly on account of its apostolical foundation (which it possessed in common with many other Churches), and not at all on account of any (more recently imagined) rights of primacy in the successors of St. Peter. When Irenæus styles the Church of Rome the most ancient, or of very high antiquity (*antiquissima*), this expression can be rightly understood only in a limited sense; for while the Church of Rome was the most ancient of the Churches of the West, there were other Churches in the East which could lay claim to a still higher antiquity. And, once more, it is to be observed that while Irenæus speaks of the Roman Church as entitled to a certain degree of respect, for reasons which he himself assigns, he yet does not in any measure attribute to it the right of authority over other Churches, nor does he imply that it made any such pretensions; and it will be seen from a valuable letter of Irenæus to a Roman bishop, of a few years later date, that he had no idea whatever of contributing or submitting to a claim of undue influence or power in that quarter.

Thus wrote Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, about the year 180; and, on the whole, it seems necessary to conclude from what he said, that in his days the Church of Rome was regarded as the chief Church of

the West, or as taking a lead among the Christian communities of neighbouring countries, inferior to it in point of size, and of more recent establishment. As to its antiquity and apostolic foundation, there were other Churches which were founded by the same apostles; and as to its extent, we may, perhaps, be disposed to think that, on purely Christian principles, large numbers gave it no valid claim to especial honour, and that the smaller and poorer Church of Lyons was probably more truly Christian, in the highest sense of the expression, than the large and wealthy Church of Rome. But we are not here seeking grounds for an opinion of our own; the question is, what were the views of Irenæus; and this is a point which we have now, perhaps, sufficiently ascertained. We shall soon see that the Roman bishops of this age laid claim to all the honour which Irenæus was disposed to attribute to their Church, and even to something more.

A. D. 193.  
Victor.

Eleutherus was succeeded by Victor as bishop of Rome in the year 193, shortly after the termination of the reign of Commodus. That emperor was killed in the year 192; and after the brief reigns, if such they may be called, of Helvius Pertinax, and Didius Julianus, he was finally succeeded by Severus, a man of indomitable energy and great military talent, but no less distinguished as avaricious, perfidious, and cruel. In the former part of his reign, Severus was tolerant towards the Christians, and it appears that some of them were admitted to places of trust in his household; but even during this period there is evidence that the professors of the Gospel endured great hardships and sufferings at the hands of subordinate magistrates, and from the jealous

A. D. 193.  
(after Helvius Pertinax and Didius Julianus) Severus, emp.

and sometimes infuriated populace. At length, Severus himself became a persecutor; either being instigated by his hatred to the Jews, or having taken alarm at the growing numbers and influence of the Christians, whom he probably suspected of being deficient in loyalty to himself, because they refused to join in those superstitious and idolatrous tokens of respect which were willingly paid to him by his pagan subjects. On one occasion, when the troops received a largess from the emperor, a Christian soldier refused to adorn himself with the garland of laurel usually worn on such occasions, on the ground of his being unable conscientiously to conform to a heathen practice. The conduct of this soldier did not find approval with the majority of Christians at Rome; but it was defended by Tertullian in his treatise "De Corona;" and it is probable that circumstances such as this may have tended to awaken suspicions in the mind of the emperor, or to embitter his prejudices if already formed. Certain, at all events, it is, that, during the latter portion of his reign, the Christians were exposed to a severe persecution, which extended to all parts of the empire. In the course of this persecution occurred the martyrdom of Leonides, the father of the celebrated Origen, at Alexandria, and of Perpetua and Felicitas, at Carthage, or elsewhere in Africa.

Soon after Victor became bishop, a certain Theodotus, said to have been a native of Byzantium, came to Rome, and broached the novel and false doctrine that Jesus Christ was a mere man. Unlike even the Gnostics, who had taught that Christ was an emanation from God which had descended on the man Jesus, Theodotus affirmed the simple humanity of

A. D. 196  
or 197.

the Saviour; pretending that, although he was miraculously conceived, and was a teacher sent from God, yet in no other respect did he differ from an ordinary human being. The author of this unscriptural doctrine (or, to use the words of an ancient writer quoted by Eusebius, "the leader and father of this God-denying apostasy, who first affirmed that Christ is a mere man") was expelled from the Roman communion by Victor;\* but he appears to have had some followers, who formed themselves into a distinct sect under its own bishop. Two years later (A. D. 198) the Church of Rome had to contend against the false teaching of Praxeas, who denied the personality of the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Divine nature, and charged the generality of Christians with worshipping three Gods, while he maintained that the Son and the Holy Ghost were mere modes or operations of the one Divine Being. Tertullian wrote a treatise against Praxeas and his followers (who were called Patripassians), and the successors of Victor formally condemned the erroneous doctrines. It is worthy of remark that Rome derived no small accession of influence from this vigorous defence of the true Christian faith in a very important particular, recognised as such by the great majority of Christians, who had still the Scriptures in their hands, and whose feelings were shocked by the promulgation of palpable error.

But the influence of Rome was already, even in the second century, too great for the simplicity and virtue of her bishops; in the minds of some of whom, to say the least, pride of precedence had been developed into a lust of power. We have now arrived

\* Euseb. H. E. 5, 28.



at the date of an event which, while of itself it testifies the actual absence of papal authority or power in the Church, yet reveals such a temper in a bishop of Rome, and was attended with such proceedings on the part of Victor, that we are compelled to regard it as at least one of the early, though faint, streaks of light in the morning horizon of the Papacy. Forty years had elapsed since Anicetus and Polycarp had discussed in a friendly spirit their differences relating to the observance of Easter; and it is probable that the Christian mind had been more or less directed to the subject ever since that period. At length the question was generally raised, and was treated at Rome in a temper widely different from that which had so favourably distinguished the previous discussion. The whole account of this event is so important in its various bearings as to be entitled to a full survey.

The Churches of Asia Minor had continued to observe the paschal festival on the fourteenth day of the first month; while all other Churches of the East and West observed it, as formerly, on the first Sunday after. A desire of general uniformity with regard to this practice appears to have now gathered strength; and numerous synods, or meetings of bishops and clergy, took place in various countries with a view to a final adjustment of the question. The bishops of Palestine assembled under the presidency of Theophilus, bishop of Cæsarea, and Narcissus, bishop of Jerusalem; those of Pontus under Palmas, as the oldest of their number; the Churches of Gaul under the presidency of Irenæus; the Church of Corinth, by itself, under its own bishop Bachyllus; and from these synods, as well as from others convened in various places, letters were addressed to the faithful

everywhere, establishing what Eusebius terms the "ecclesiastical dogma," that the Festival of the Resurrection should be celebrated on the Lord's day, and no other; and among these letters there was one from the Church of Rome, bearing the name of the bishop, Victor. On the other side, Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, presided at a meeting of the bishops of Asia Minor, who were resolved to maintain their own ancient custom; and we find that Polycrates addressed a letter to Victor, declaring their intention, and appealing to ancient and apostolical authority in support of it. From this epistle of Polycrates it appears that it was Victor who had requested him to assemble his bishops for a consideration of the question; and, from the style of defence in which the epistle is written, especially from the repetition of the apostolic maxim, "We ought to obey God rather than men," it seems probable that the present agitation of the controversy is to be traced to Victor, and that his letter to Polycrates was conceived in a dictatorial, or even threatening, tone. Be this as it may, on the receipt of this letter from Polycrates, subscribed as it was by a large number of the bishops of Asia Minor, Victor immediately exerted his influence to obtain a general sentence of excommunication against the recusant Churches on the ground of heterodoxy, by sending letters to other bishops, in which he declared that the offending parties were absolutely cut off from communion with his own Church of Rome. In this proceeding, however, he failed to obtain the general concurrence of other Churches; but, since Eusebius says, "This was not approved by all the bishops," we may probably infer that some of them did consent to the proposal. Many, at all events, refused, and sent

back letters of severe remonstrance, exhorting Victor to cultivate a spirit of peace, concord, and love towards his neighbours. Among these well-merited rebukes we find a letter from Irenæus, which has been preserved, in the original Greek, by Eusebius, and is valuable, not only on its own account, but also as enabling us to form a more complete estimate of the meaning of that passage in his writings which we have already considered as laudatory of the Church of Rome. Writing in the name of the brethren "whom he governed in Gaul," Irenæus acknowledges it to be true that the paschal festival ought to be observed only on the Lord's day, but tells Victor plainly that he ought not to refuse to hold communion with whole Churches of God who observed a different custom in accordance with an ancient tradition; "for," continues he, "the controversy relates, not merely to the day of observance, but to the manner of the fast itself. Some think they ought to fast one day, others reckon two, others again more; and some make their period to consist of forty successive hours, day and night; and this difference in the observation of the fast did not spring up in our days, but began long ago in the time of our predecessors, who, being perhaps not very strict in their government, handed down to posterity a custom which may have originated in simplicity and ignorance. But, notwithstanding this diversity, they maintained peace with each other, and we continue to maintain it; and this difference in the fast commends our unanimity in the faith." (The concluding words of this passage are very remarkable; involving, in fact, a great principle of sound Church polity.) Irenæus then proceeds to refer to the proceedings of past his-

tory in the following terms:—"And besides, those presbyters who, before the time of Soter, presided over the Church which you now govern—namely, Anicetus, Pius, Hyginus, Telesphorus, and Xystus—did not themselves concur in this observance (*i. e.*, the paschal practice of Asia Minor), nor did they suffer those who were with them to do so; but yet they continued on terms of friendship with those who came to them from Churches in which the observance was maintained. And although the fact of practising it among those who declined to do so was on this account the more striking, yet never were any ejected on account of this custom. On the contrary, the presbyters who preceded you, although they did not observe this custom, sent the eucharist to those from other Churches who did so." And the epistle concludes with a narrative of the amicable discussion which had taken place between Anicetus and Polycarp.\* After these proceedings, the Churches of Asia Minor defended their practice in an epistle addressed to their brethren of other communions; and they appear to have continued their ancient observance without molestation, until at length uniformity was established by the Council of Nicæa in the fourth century.

In this painful narrative there are many things worthy of remark. The intolerant and overbearing spirit of Victor is manifest, and needs no comment. It is also clear that the bishop of Rome was not at this time regarded as the universal head of the Church; and that, in fact, all Churches of the East and West were independent of each other. This abundantly appears from the refusal of other bishops

\* Euseb. H. E. 5, 24, 25. Conf. Socrates, H. E. 5, 22.

to fall in with the plans of Victor, and the remonstrances which they addressed to him ; as well as from the determination of the Churches of Asia Minor to abide by their own customs, contrary to the practice of all the rest of Christendom. It has been said, indeed, that the question was merely one of ceremony, not of doctrine, implying that the bishop of Rome was supreme in matters of faith, although evidently not so with reference to religious observances and customs ; but the fact is (as we have seen) that it was on the very ground of "heterodoxy" that Victor rested the quarrel ; and it is certain that he had no universal authority in any ecclesiastical matter whatever.

One point there is, however, of considerable importance in our present inquiry, which has been extremely misunderstood by both Romanist and Protestant writers. It has been set in a right light by Mosheim,\* and deserves our especial attention. Nothing has been more common with ecclesiastical historians than to speak of Victor as having on this occasion "excommunicated" the Churches of Asia Minor, that term being applied to the transaction in the full modern sense of the expression ; and hence Romanists, on the one hand, have affirmed the antiquity of their Church's authority, while Protestants, on the other, have denounced the enormity of its early usurpation. Now, an attentive reader of the foregoing statement, in which I have closely followed Eusebius, who is the great authority on this subject, must have already seen that such a view of the case is far from being correct. Victor did not excommunicate,—he did not even pretend to a power of ex-

\* De Rebus Christianorum, sæc. 2, § 72.

communicating,—from the whole Church ; he merely declared that his own Church should not hold communion with the Churches of Asia Minor ; and he endeavoured to persuade the bishops of other Churches to adopt a similar measure. In this attempt he failed ; and, had he succeeded, while the result would have proved that he possessed a preponderating influence, yet the very attempt itself would have included a confession of the absence of supreme authority on his part. He displayed a domineering spirit, and he manifestly stretched beyond due measure that power which each community possessed of excluding unworthy members, or of declaring with whom it was willing to hold communion ; but he did not even attempt to usurp a power of governing other Churches. Such attempts, and eventually such usurpation, were reserved for later days ; and the history of Victor's proceedings in the paschal controversy remains on record as a proof that *at the close of the second century there was not even the assumption of authority by the bishops of Rome beyond the limits of Italy.*

Still, however, the question will occur, what is it which, under our historical point of view, this matter does display to us ? Surely, we cannot mistake when we say that we discover in this transaction *the rising spirit of the papacy.* We have before us an attempt at a conspiracy,—or rather, since the matter was open to observation, at a confederacy,—against the liberties of Christians and Churches, who, upon a certain question, happened to be in a minority. The confederacy, indeed, was not formed, in consequence of the right feelings and independent spirit of those who were invited to assist in it ; but the attempt was made to bring one Church under the yoke of bondage to

another, and to compel the minority of Churches to yield to the dictates of the larger number. The spirit of ecclesiastical aggression and tyranny had begun to work; and it developed itself, first, in the sentiments and conduct of a Roman bishop. And observe how insidious was the attempt. There was, in the first place, an effort at something like persuasion: Victor tried the effect of a letter, a paternal letter as he no doubt would have called it, but in fact a threatening letter, as a means of inducing compliance; and with regard to the act of writing this letter (though not as to the tone of it) he could appeal to the practice of sending and receiving epistles which had prevailed from time immemorial among Christian Churches. Failing in his brotherly endeavour at persuasion, he sought to arouse a spirit, which indeed would not come at his command, but which, if he could have evoked it, would have displayed itself in an act of persecution against his unoffending brethren of the East. He did not succeed in his unworthy efforts; but he set a pernicious example to bishops of later times, and framed an idea of spiritual despotism which was afterwards carried out to an extent such as neither himself nor his contemporaries could possibly have foreseen. Victor, in short, being himself in advance of his age, attempted to get up, and bring into action, a kind of *Church union*;—a step which he was led to take, either thinking that he possessed, or at least being desirous of possessing, the influence of a leader. *Obsta principiis.*

There is yet another important feature in the history of this controversy,—the first convening of Church councils. Some years earlier (160-178) there had been indeed meetings of the Churches of Asia Minor,

at which the pretensions of the Montanists were discussed; but these assemblies were by no means so large or systematic as the synods which were convened with reference to the paschal question. We here find, for the first time, numbers of bishops belonging to various Churches meeting together under the presidency of one head, who was the bishop of the largest or most influential Church in the district; and it is obvious that an arrangement such as this tended directly to the recognition of a difference of importance, and eventually to a difference of rank, and a system of subordination, among those who now assumed the appearance of an episcopal body. The bishop who presided at a council, obtained by this very circumstance a kind of acknowledged precedence among his brethren; and all circumstances conspired to throw this power into the hands of the bishop of the Church belonging to the chief town of a province, to which the bishops of smaller communities would naturally be invited to repair. We are not to suppose that this effect was immediately produced; but such was decidedly the tendency of the assembling of ecclesiastical synods, and a result which they contributed to bring about. Nor is this all. Not only did the convening of councils thus tend to exalt one bishop above another, but they likewise assisted in giving power to all the bishops, and to the clergy generally, over the people. The bishop of each Church, or sometimes one of its presbyters, was its representative in the councils; and just in proportion as these bodies undertook to settle controversies of faith, or matters of worship and discipline, so the clergy became in fact the legislators of the Churches. In order to secure the liberties of the people, either



no councils should have been held, except those of single Churches, at which all eligible members might have been entitled to assist, or else, in the case of General Councils, a considerable number of the people should have been deputed to attend together with a smaller number of their teachers. Of the arrogant and domineering spirit which prevailed in these councils there will be occasion to speak hereafter.

At the close of the second century flourished Tertullian, the first of the Latin ecclesiastical writers. He attached himself to the Montanists; but, notwithstanding this departure from the prevailing sentiments of his Christian brethren, he was held in high esteem by his contemporaries, and continued in after ages to maintain his position amongst the fathers of the Church. On matters of doctrine his writings are of considerable value; his *Apology or Defence of the Christian Religion*, addressed to the heathen magistrates, is the most complete and masterly production of its kind; and his writings are remarkable as having set the tone of ecclesiastical Latinity. In one of his larger and more elaborate works, Tertullian adopted the line of argument which Irenæus had already employed against the Gnostics; meeting the false teachers on their own ground of pretended tradition, by showing that, in the Churches which were founded by apostles and had been governed by a succession of bishops from the apostles' days, no other traditions existed than such as were in conformity with the written doctrines of the evangelists and apostles. In the course of this argument,—which has been unfairly urged in the support of the doctrine of an independent and supplemental tradition, having authority in matters of faith,—Tertullian makes men-

tion of the Church of Rome, complimentary indeed, but yet by no means implying that existence of power or authority in that Church which it has been supposed to prove. The passage is remarkable, and has an important bearing on our present inquiry, as showing that in the time of Tertullian, at the beginning of the third century, the Church of Rome was regarded as being precisely on the same footing as all other apostolical communities in various parts of the world. "Go through the apostolical Churches," says this writer, "in which to the present day the very chairs of the apostles preside in their own places. . . . If Achaia be nearest to you, there you have Corinth. If you are not remote from Macedonia, there you have Philippi, and the Thessalonians. If you can go to Asia, there you have Ephesus. Or if you are near Italy, there you have Rome, to which we also (*i. e.* from Africa) may repair for the confirmation of our faith, (*unde nobis quoque auctoritas præsto est*). How happy is that church! Over it apostles poured forth their whole doctrine with their blood! There Peter was conformed to the sufferings of his Lord! There Paul was crowned with the death of John [the Baptist]! Thence the apostle John, after he had been plunged into boiling oil, and escaped unhurt, was banished to the isle [of Patmos]!"\* It is plain that, according to these views of Tertullian, there was no more power for deciding controversies in the Church of Rome than in that of Ephesus or Corinth; † and that such power resided in each and all of them only inasmuch as it was found, in point of fact, that their doctrine was in harmony with the written word. It

\* Tertull. de Præscript. Adv. Hæreticos, cap. 36.

† Mosheim, De Rebus Christianorum, sæc. 2, § 21.

is, however, equally manifest that, by this time, the Church of Rome was regarded throughout the West with peculiar affection and respect; and if we couple this fact with the attempt of Victor to exercise a strong influence over all the Churches in Christendom, we can hardly fail to perceive that we have arrived at an era in our history which demands especial attention.

We have seen that, at the close of the second century, the existence of papal authority and power was unknown. The bishop of Rome was indeed styled "father," but so were all other bishops; and whatever authority he possessed within the borders of his Church, they likewise exercised within the limits of their own. But while the bishop of Rome neither exercised nor claimed authority over the Churches or their rulers, he had made an attempt to control, and in some cases to intimidate, those who did not belong to his communion. In this unwarranted line of conduct he had met with general resistance, and with rebuke; and it is more than probable that his failure tended for a season to repress arrogant pretensions on the part of the Roman see. Still, however, we find ourselves compelled to recognise the rudiments of papal power in that pre-eminence, in point of size and reputation, which was now so extensively conceded to the Church of Rome; a pre-eminence which, from the circumstances of the case, continued to exist, notwithstanding the disgraceful proceedings of an arrogant and overbearing bishop. As the largest, most wealthy, and most honoured of the Churches of the West, Rome was now in a position to take a leap into the seat of power. But why was this? It seems to be too lightly taken for granted that the subsequent

ascendancy of the Church of Rome was a natural consequence of her original position in the capital of the empire, and that her eventual supremacy was, to say the least, unavoidable and necessary, if not right. But whence this necessity? According to what constitution or state of things was this dominion natural? A moment's reflection may show that the mere circumstance of superior size and wealth in the Church over which a certain bishop presided was not sufficient to invest him with authority over the bishops of other Churches, without the existence of some special predisposing cause. The lord mayor of London has been, for centuries past, the chief magistrate of the capital of this country, without being at all in a position to exercise authority over the mayors of provincial towns; and it is fully understood that they can admit the superior size, wealth, and respectability of the body over which he presides, without for a moment endangering their ancient and rightful independence. In like manner, the Church of Rome would not have obtained dominion in the West, if there had not been in the state of things some element besides that of the relative size, or even the comparative antiquity, of the various Churches which were eventually fused into the great spiritual empire. The question is, what was that element? This is the inquiry which we propose, when we ask why we are obliged to regard the circumstances of the Church at the end of the second century as including the foundations of papal power. The whole course of history will show that there was a foreign element largely mixed up with the true life of the Church; that the Papacy was not a due development of certain principles and powers rightly inherent in the spiritual body,

but an accretion from without,—an incrustation, as it were, of worldly elements, overlying, deforming, and oppressing the true vital energies which were really awaiting their own true development, and claiming a free and healthful exercise.

From the writings of Tertullian we learn that the ministers of the Christian Church had by this time become a kind of distinct caste, or at least a class of men possessing separate interests, and supposed to be invested with peculiar and inherent power. The distinction had been established between *Ordo* and *Plebs*; a phraseology borrowed, as is generally supposed, from the Roman jurisprudence, in which the body of senators was termed *Ordo*, in contradistinction to inferior citizens. But still more striking is another set of terms occurring in the pages of Tertullian, where we find for the first time the expressions *clerus* and *laici* applied respectively to Church pastors and the members of their flocks. *Clerus* denotes “a lot;” and it has been thought that this term was originally applied to Christian ministers as having been chosen to their office by lot; but it seems rather to have been derived from the use of the term in Scripture, where Christians are denominated, like the Jews of old, the lot or portion of the Lord; the term which was in this sense originally applied to all believers having become restricted in its application to the ministers of the Church, as if they were especially near or dear to God, or as if they bore a peculiar relation to the Lord, like the priests and Levites under the Jewish dispensation.\* *Laici* is a Greek word, which, like the Latin

\* Some traces of this Jewish notion of the Christian priesthood have been supposed to exist in the letter of Pölycrates to Victor; but this is uncertain; and the date is nearly the same. It is in Tertullian that we find it clearly stated for the first time.

*plebs*, denotes simply "the people," considered as inferior to those from whom they are distinguished. The Christian minister must, from the first, have possessed a personal influence, and must have been regarded with respect, in proportion to his faithfulness and zeal in the discharge of appointed functions; he was highly esteemed for his work's sake, that is to say, for the work which he actually fulfilled, not merely for that which was assigned to him; and even a Christian apostle could magnify his office without claiming any undue honour to himself, and while his interests were thoroughly identified with those of his Christian brethren everywhere. But a change had taken place in these matters. The Christian teachers had assumed the character of mediators between God and man;—a character which, so far as it was supposed to belong to them, could not but have the effect of raising them far above the level of ordinary humanity. And this supposed superiority of the clergy to the laity lay at the foundation of an assumption of power by one part of the clergy over the other. Separate interests, having been established, had to be maintained, and would be likely to call for augmentation: the clergy soon found that in order to become a strong body, they must be a united body; and this union could not exist without throwing power into the hands of leaders.

But we have not yet traced the evil to its root. Are we to suppose that the fault rested wholly with the ministers of the Church? Have we any ground for regarding them almost in the light of a set of conspirators, who formed, in very early times, a plot for obtaining spiritual dominion, and laboured stealthily and assiduously for the accomplishment of this base design? By no means so. There is nothing in the

history of the early ages of the Church which would warrant the casting of such a reflection on the memory of her ancient teachers as a whole. On the contrary, the ministers of the Church were pre-eminent among the most stedfast martyrs and confessors in the cause of Christ; and the very offices which they held often rendered them the special butt of persecution. Our attention ought to be directed in this case to that general corruption of Christian morals which seems to have taken place especially during the latter half of the second century, rather than to the supposed sinister designs of any particular section of the Church. There may have been among its bishops and other presbyters men of a worldly mind, disposed to form or to foster ambitious designs; but it is more than probable, that, for the most part, the evil originated with the restlessness, selfishness, and insubordination of large numbers of people, who were perhaps even outwardly but half converted from their heathenism, and not at all renewed in the spirit of their minds. There may have been a defect of legitimate pastoral influence, in some cases through the fault of the Church at large, as well as in others by the vice or inefficiency of the pastor; and it may often have happened that, from whatever cause this want of influence arose, it may have led to the attempt of a fictitious substitute. Very soon may the ministers of a distracted or languid Church have been induced to adopt the insidious, but unlawful, practice of doing evil that good might come. Influence for good may have been desired as the end; and influence by unwarrantable methods may have been sought as a means for the attainment of that end. Where the word of the Gospel was not found powerful enough, other weapons may have been employed, as

it was thought, in subserviency to that word. If so, the mistake could not but have been baneful and ruinous in the extreme; it could not but have tended to promote, instead of checking, the growth of corruption in the Church. If the minister condescended to the moral level of a degraded people, he was in the direct way to become himself partaker of their degradation. And if we could become intimately acquainted with the spiritual history of the ancient Church, it is more than probable that we should trace in a process such as this much of that decline and fall of primitive simplicity and truth which were certainly coexistent with the rise and progress of papal usurpation. The priestly character of Christians in general, in its true spiritual sense, distinctly recognised by Justin Martyr,\* Irenæus,† and even still by Tertullian himself,‡ was now less effectually sustained than in the primitive ages of the Gospel; and just in proportion as this reality declined, the shadow of a priestly character, in its gross and Jewish sense, was grasped by that portion of the Church which was rising into eminence on the ruins of the other.

This tendency to represent the inward by the outward, and then to substitute the latter for the former, and so to put form and name in the place of life and power, disclosed itself during the second century in the conduct of Christian worshippers, no less than in the formation of a sacerdotal caste. As early as the beginning of the third century, we discover some traces of a departure from primitive simplicity in this respect;§ and we find also that ascetic practices had

\* Dialogue with Trypho. † Adv. Hær. ‡ Lib. de Baptism.

§ Compare the account of baptism in Justin Martyr's Apol. 1, c. 79, with that in Tertullian, De Cor. Mil. c. 3.



risen into some measure of repute, and that the commemoration of the deaths of martyrs at their graves began, to say the least, to wear the semblance of superstition. As the century advanced, and the borders of the Church were enlarged, many additions were made to the Christian ritual; and we shall find that, before the time of Constantine, a large number of rites and ceremonies had been introduced, tending more or less directly to the support and extension of that evil influence, the power of the priest.

While the line of demarcation was being thus strongly drawn between the ministers and the members of the Church—the former increasing in importance, and being withdrawn from worldly affairs on the ground of a peculiar sacredness attaching to their order,—there was at the same time springing up a broader distinction than heretofore between bishops and presbyters; and we shall find that the history of the third century will disclose, on the one hand, a gradual and perhaps uncontested exaltation of the clergy over the laity, and, on the other, a concentration of power in the hands of the bishops, not however without a decided but ineffectual resistance on the part of the presbyters. This growth of ecclesiastical power must be distinctly traced, as being unquestionably a forerunner, or, more strictly speaking, the foundation, of the papacy.

Zephyrinus succeeded Victor as bishop of the Roman Church in the year 202, about the commencement of the persecution under Severus; and it appears, from the writings of Minucius Felix, that the sufferings of Christians at Rome during this period were not inferior to those of their brethren in more distant portions of the empire. It was in the course of this

A. D. 202.  
Zephyrinus.

A. D. 211.  
Caracalla,  
emp.

About  
A. D. 215.

reign that Philostratus, a rhetorician of Rome, composed the life of Apollonius of Tyana, an impostor whose pretended miracles were recounted by this writer with a view to set him up as a rival to Christ, and thus to depreciate the claims of the Gospel in the minds of the heathen. Under Caracalla, who succeeded his father Severus in 211, as joint emperor with his brother Geta, and in the following year, after the murder of the latter, as sole emperor, the Christians enjoyed a period of repose. During his reign, as is generally supposed, a council of African and Numidian bishops assembled at Carthage, under the presidency of Agrippinus, bishop of the Church in that city; and in this council it was decided that baptism administered by heretics was invalid, and that, consequently, the rite must be repeated in the case of those persons who, having been so baptized, should afterwards desire to join the Church.

It was during the episcopate of Zephyrinus that Tertullian joined the party of the Montanists, an event which, according to Jerome, is to be ascribed to the jealousy of the Roman clergy against this great man.\* As a Montanist, Tertullian inveighed strongly against the conduct of a bishop (perhaps the bishop of Carthage) who had established a regulation concerning the restoration of penitents, which he interpreted as a mischievous relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline.† In the course of this charge, involving the accusation of an assumption of unwarranted authority, Tertullian calls the offending bishop *Pontifex Maximus*, and *Episcopus Episcoporum*. He gives him this title manifestly by way of rebuke; and it may serve to demonstrate the lack

\* L'Art de Vérifier les Dates, S. Zephirin.

† De Pudicit.

of argument among the advocates of the Papacy, when we find Baronius in the first place taking it for granted that Tertullian intends to designate the bishop of Rome, Zephyrinus, and then accepting the title as though it had been given in good earnest, or rather as though it was couched in the very words of the bishop himself, supposed to have adopted a style of dignity which had already become usual.\* At the same time, we can hardly imagine Tertullian to have conceived in his mind this peculiar strain of invective, if there had not already been some indications of a threatening rise of episcopal power to an undue and injurious extent. He must surely have discovered or suspected a spirit of domination in one or more bishops of the Church; or else the idea of a sovereign episcopal power, even as a theory to be denounced or wondered at, could hardly have been present to his mind.

Zephyrinus died in December, 218, and was succeeded by Callistus in the early part of the year following. Great light has been recently shed upon the personal history of these two bishops, and incidentally upon the general state of the Christian Church at Rome during the period of their rule, by the discovery and publication of the "Philosophumena,"—a long lost work, which at its first appearance was attributed to Origen, but is now by general consent assigned to Hippolytus, who was bishop of Portus (the ancient Roman harbour) during the episcopates of Victor, Zephyrinus, and Callistus, at Rome. According to a minute and circumstantial narrative contained in this work, Callistus appears to have been not only (as probably others of these early

A. D. 219.  
Callistus.

\* Baron. An. 216, n. 4.

bishops were) of servile origin,\* but also a man of profligate character; and it is impossible to attach credit to the account thus given without at the same time being deeply convinced, either that the general standard of morals among the Roman Christians was miserably low, or that, for some reason or other, ecclesiastical power was vested in the hands of the worst portion of the community. The history of Callistus, as transmitted to us in the Ninth Book of this Treatise of Hippolytus,† is as follows, according to the version of Dr. Wordsworth:—"He was a servant of a certain Carpophorus, a Christian of Cæsar's household. Carpophorus intrusted him, as a Christian, with a considerable sum of money, professing that he would bring him gain from the occupation of a banker. He set up a bank in the *piscina publica*, and in course of time many deposits

\* Callistus occurs in Roman history as the name of a freedman of Caligula. Tac. Ann. 11, 29, 38; 12, &c.

† "This newly-discovered work unfolds to us, in the ninth book, a portion of ancient Church history with which hitherto we have had comparatively but little acquaintance, from the lack of materials for an accurate knowledge with respect to it. The writer lived at a period prior to that of our most ancient ecclesiastical historians. He does much to fill up a chasm in the annals of the Western Church. And the portion of Church history with which he deals is one of great importance to us, on account of its relation to certain questions of Christian doctrine and Church discipline, which possess more than ordinary interest, and exercise more than common influence, at the present time. The writer places us at Rome; he describes, with graphic exactness, events which took place in the Church of Rome in the second and third centuries after Christ. He does not speak on hearsay, but as an eye-witness; and not only so, he represents himself as occupying an important position in the Church of Rome at that time, and as taking a prominent part in the occurrences which he narates. In a word, we have here a suffragan bishop of the Roman Church, in the third century, presenting us with a memoir of his own time."—Wordsworth, Hippolytus and the Church of Rome, part 1, chap. 2.

were intrusted to him by widows and brethren, through the influence of the name of Carpophorus. But Callistus embezzled them all, and became bankrupt. And when he was in this plight, tidings did not fail to reach Carpophorus, who said that he would call him to account. When Callistus perceived this, and apprehended the danger which threatened him from his master, he ran away, taking flight towards the sea, and having found a ship at Portus ready to sail, he embarked with a purpose to sail whithersoever the vessel might be bound. But not even thus could he escape; for the news did not fail to reach the ears of Carpophorus. And he, standing on the shore, endeavoured, according to the information he had received, to make for the ship, which was in the middle of the harbour. But when the boatman (who was to ferry Carpophorus) was lingering, Callistus, being in the ship, saw his master from a distance, and perceiving himself to be caught, hazarded his life, and, thinking that all was now over with him, he threw himself into the sea. But the sailors having leaped into the boats, drew him out against his will. And while those who were on shore raised a great shout, he was delivered to his master, and brought back to Rome, where his master confined him in the Pistrinum. In course of time, as is wont to be the case, certain brethren came to Carpophorus, and besought him to release his runaway slave from punishment, saying that he declared that he had money vested in the hands of certain persons. Carpophorus, like a pious man, said that he did not care for his own money, but that he was anxious for the deposits; for many bewailed themselves to him, saying that it was by reason of his name that they confided

to Callistus what they had intrusted to him. Being thus persuaded, he ordered him to be released. But, having nothing to pay, and not being able to run away again, on account of being watched, he devised a plan for his own destruction. On a Saturday, under pretence of going to his debtors, he went to the synagogue of the Jews, who were assembled in it, and he stood there, and made an uproar against them; and they, being thus disturbed, abused him and beat him, and dragged him before Fuscianus, Prefect of the city. And then they said: ‘The Romans have given us leave to read the Law of our fathers in public. But this man here came in and interrupted us, saying that he is a Christian.’ Fuscianus being seated on the bench, and being exasperated by what the Jews said against Callistus, tidings did not fail to come to the ears of Carpophorus. He hastened to the tribunal of the Prefect, and exclaimed, ‘I entreat thee, my lord Fuscianus, do not believe him, for he is not a Christian, but seeks an occasion of death, having embezzled much money of mine, as I will show.’ But the Jews thought this was a subterfuge, as if Carpophorus desired to extricate him by this plea, and clamoured more vehemently in the ears of the Prefect; and he, being urged by them, scourged Callistus, and banished him to the mines in Sardinia. But after a time, there being other martyrs there, Marcia, the concubine of (the emperor) Commodus, being a religious woman, and desirous of doing a good work, having sent for Victor of blessed memory, who was then bishop of the Church, inquired of him what martyrs were in Sardinia. He presented all their names, but did not tender the name of Callistus, knowing the crimes

that had been perpetrated by him. Marcia, having obtained her suit from Commodus, gives the letter of release to a certain Hyacinthus, an eunuch, a presbyter, who, having received it, sailed to Sardinia, and having delivered it to the then governor of the island, released the martyrs—except Callistus. But he fell down before him, and wept and prayed that he might be released. Hyacinthus then being moved, desires the governor to set him free, saying that he himself had brought up Marcia, and promising him indemnity. He being persuaded, liberated Callistus also. But when he reached Rome, Victor was much distressed by what had taken place, but being a kind-hearted man, he held his peace; but guarding against the obloquy from many (for the crimes of Callistus were recent), and because Carpophorus still urged his charge against Callistus, he sent him to abide at Antium, settling on him a monthly allowance for his maintenance. After Victor had fallen asleep in death, Zephyrinus having had him (Callistus) as a coadjutor for the control of his clergy, honoured him to his own damage, and having transferred him from Antium, set him over the Cemetery. And Callistus being always with him, and, as I said before,\* courting him with hypocrisy, eclipsed him, being incapable of forming any judgment on the arguments used, and not perceiving the stratagem of Callistus, who accommodated all his language to his taste. Thus it came to pass that after the death of Zephyrinus, Callistus, imagining that he had gained that to which he had aspired, cast off Sabellius as heterodox, through fear of me, and supposing that he might thus be able to wipe off the reproach to which he was exposed in the

\* The reference is to the passage quoted in the following note.

eyes of the Churches, as if he were not of unsound belief. In good truth he was a deceiver and impostor, and in course of time drew many along with him.”

If we cannot discard this whole story as a fiction, it is impossible to avoid proposing to ourselves the question, What must have been the moral and religious condition of that whole Church in which such transactions took place,—a Church in which an illiterate and covetous bishop\* was succeeded in his high office by a felon lately returned from exile, elected to his dignity by the suffrages of a majority of Church members? Accustomed as we are to venerate and rejoice in the supposed moral purity of early Churches, it is yet plain that their portion of alloy was very great, and that their condition presents much to be deplored as well as perhaps much to be admired. At all events, it appears that in the position of a bishop of Rome in the early part of the third century there must have been something to excite the cupidity of evil men; and there must have been some bad influence extensively at work in order to give them an opportunity of compassing their ends. It is also to be observed that, according to the newly-discovered Treatise, both Zephyrinus and Callistus were personally involved in the errors of the Noetians or

\* “Callistus—a man crafty in evil, and versatile in deceit, aspiring to the chair of the Episcopate. He influenced Zephyrinus, who was an unlearned and illiterate person, and unskilled in ecclesiastical science, and whom, being a receiver of bribes and covetous, Callistus led as he pleased, persuading him by dogmas and unlawful demands; him Callistus was ever intriguing to introduce strife among the brethren; and then Callistus himself swayed both sides by wily words to incline to his own interests.” (Philosophumena, book ix. Wordsworth’s translation.) Such is the account which we have now received of two early Roman bishops, of whom we have hitherto known nothing but their names, and the order of their succession.



Patripassians. “These two bishops of Rome lapsed into heresy, in a primary article of the Christian faith, and in opposition to the exhortations of orthodox teachers. They strenuously maintained that heresy, and propagated it by their official authority as bishops of Rome. They tenaciously maintained and they promulgated publicly a doctrine which the Church of Rome herself, with all other Churches of Christendom, now declares to be heretical. They also denounced those who held the true faith.” Nor must we overlook the fact that “when Zephyrinus and Callistus fell into heresy at the beginning of the third century, and when they endeavoured to disseminate their false doctrine, they were resisted by St. Hippolytus. He does not appear to have imagined that he was bound to conform to them in their doctrine. On the contrary, he stood forth boldly and rebuked them. . . . Hippolytus certainly had never learnt that every Church and every Christian must submit to the bishop of Rome.”\* And this Hippolytus, we must remember, was one of the suburbicarian bishops of the Roman Church in the early part of the third century.

Under the brief reigns of Maerinus and Elagabalus, the Christians continued to enjoy exemption from authorised persecution. Mammæa, the aunt of Elagabalus, was visited by Origen at Antioch† in compliance with her request, in order to hold a conference on matters of religion: and although she does not appear to have professed herself a Christian, there can be no doubt that her influence was exercised in

A. D. 217–  
222.  
Maerinus,  
emp.  
Elagabalus,  
emp.

\* Wordsworth, St. Hippolytus and the Church of Rome, part i. chap. 12.

† Some think that this interview took place in the reign of Alexander Severus, A. D. 229, when Mammæa accompanied her son in his expedition against Persia.

A. D. 222.  
Alexander  
Severus,  
emp.

favour of the Church. Her son, Alexander Severus, succeeded Elagabalus in the empire; and during his reign, as might have been expected, the Christians received not only public toleration, but positive marks of indulgence and favour. This emperor, in making a regulation respecting the appointment of public officers in his dominions, expressly referred with approbation to the custom of the Christians, who never appointed their Church officers without previously publishing the names of those who were about to receive such appointment, and giving the members of the Church an opportunity of assenting to the choice as that of fit persons to serve in the ministry.

It appears probable that at the beginning of this century the Christians at Rome had no public buildings for religious worship; they still continued, we may suppose, to meet as before either in private houses or in the catacombs. But it is likely that during the peaceable times which followed they began to erect such edifices; and there is evidence that they possessed either at least one such, or the site for one, in the time of Alexander Severus. The historian of his reign informs us that a claim having been made by a certain keeper of a pot-house for a piece of ground which had been occupied by the Christians, the emperor gave judgment in favour of the latter, on the ground that it was better for God to be worshipped there in any mode whatever, than that the place should be devoted to the purposes of intemperance and vice.

A. D. 223.  
Urban.  
A. D. 230.  
Pontian.

At the beginning of this reign Callistus was succeeded in the Roman bishopric by Urban; who, before its close, was followed by Pontian. At this time a controversy arose concerning certain doctrines con-

tained, or supposed to be contained, in the writings of the celebrated Origen, the history of whose life supplies us with a view of several particulars as to the relations which at that time subsisted between bishops and their presbyters, and between the bishops of the several Churches among themselves. Origen, having for a time left Alexandria, perhaps not on very good terms with Demetrius, bishop of the Church in that city, and having been invited by the bishop of the Church in Cæsarea to expound the Scriptures in their religious assemblies while he was yet a layman, Demetrius took offence at this proceeding, and remonstrated with the Cæsarean bishop on account of its irregularity. Subsequently, and after Origen had again taught for some time as before in the catechetical school of Alexandria, he was ordained presbyter at Cæsarea by Theoctistus, bishop of that Church, in the presence of Alexander, bishop of the Church of Jerusalem, and the heads of other neighbouring Churches. Again Demetrius issued a complaint of the irregularity of their proceedings; and wrote, not only to Theoctistus and Alexander, but also to other bishops in various parts of the world, complaining of their conduct. Soon after the return of Origen to Alexandria as a presbyter ordained by foreign bishops, councils were held against him, by which it was determined that he must quit the city, and afterwards that he should be expelled from the communion of the Church, and be degraded from his rank of presbyter. He then retired to Cæsarea, and lived in harmony with the Church in that place, and with the Churches of Palestine, Phœnicia, and other neighbouring countries. From this narrative it appears plainly, on the one hand, that the bishops of

the several Churches were independent of each other, and, on the other, that they were beginning, at least in some places, to hold their presbyters in great subjection.

Maximus having come to the throne after the murder of Alexander Severus, in the year 235, distinguished the commencement of his reign by a barbarous and extensive massacre of all persons who were suspected of being attached to his predecessor; and it is probable that occasion was taken from the unsettled state of affairs to inflict persecutions upon the Christians in some parts of the empire. The successions of Roman emperors, who now met with an untimely end, was rapid; Gordian succeeded Maximus in 238, and was followed by Philip in 244; by Decius in 249, by Gallus in 251, and by Valerian in 253. At the same time there was a quick succession of bishops in the Roman Church, several of whom appear to have suffered martyrdom. Pontian died in 235, when he was succeeded by Anteros, who held his office only during the space of one month, and afterwards by Fabian, who was martyred in the year 250. After a vacancy, Cornelius was elected bishop, under circumstances to which we must give peculiar attention as having an important bearing on the question of episcopal claims and power at this period. Cornelius died as a martyr in 252, and was succeeded by Lucius, who, having met the same honourable death in the next year, was followed by Stephen, about the date of the accession of Valerian to the throne. During the reigns of Gordian and Philip, the Churches enjoyed tranquillity; indeed, the Christians had the benefit of peace during a space of forty years in the first half

A. D. 235.  
Maximus,  
emp.

A. D. 238-  
253.  
Gordian,  
Philip,  
Decius,  
Gallus,  
Valerian,  
emp.

A. D. 235-  
253.  
Anteros,  
Fabian,  
Cornelius,  
Lucius,  
Stephen,

of this century, with the exception of a brief interruption under Maximus; but they were subject to a violent persecution under Decius and Gallus. Decius, having resolved, as it would seem, to suppress Christianity throughout the empire, issued an edict directing that persons suspected of adhering to this religion should be brought before the magistrates and required to offer sacrifice to the heathen gods; and a failure of compliance with this demand was followed by confiscation of property, imprisonment, or death. A similar edict was issued by Gallus, upon occasion of a pestilence which the heathen, as usual, were disposed to ascribe to the presence of Christians in the empire. After the death of Gallus, the accession of Valerian brought the Christians a temporary repose. From the account of Cyprian\* it appears that, during the long period of repose, the tone of morals among the great body of the Church, both ministers and people, had become lamentably corrupt; and it seemed to the mind of that devout writer that the sufferings which followed were no less than marked and well-merited chastisement for the iniquity which had so fearfully abounded among those who had been permitted, in times of peace and prosperity, to name the name of Christ.

Of the Roman bishops just enumerated little is known from authentic history except their names, and, in some cases, the death which they suffered in the cause of Christ; nor are we informed of any remarkable events as having transpired in the internal history of the Church while they administered its affairs. An exception to this remark occurs, however, in the case of the election of Cornelius, A.D.

\* Cypr. De Lapsis.

251, and in the annals of his episcopate. Opinions were at this time running high on the opposite sides of the question, whether those who had lapsed from the faith in time of persecution ought to be again received into communion with the Church upon profession of penitence. Parties had already been formed on this question at Carthage, where a body of presbyters had united in opposition to their bishop Cyprian, and had commenced a division which continued for a long time to distract the Churches of Africa; and one of the leaders in this party, Novatus, apparently a man of restless spirit, and more or less deserving of certain heavy reproaches which have been heaped upon his character, afterwards made his influence felt in Rome. Upon the election of Cornelius to the see of Rome, Novatian, a presbyter of that Church, together with several other presbyters and confessors, protested against it, on the ground of laxity of principle in Cornelius as to the readmission of the lapsed; they themselves maintaining the strict view of the case, by which, without denying that it was possible for such penitents to make their peace with God, their open reception into the Church was regarded as a sinful breach of discipline. Persisting in their objections, this uncompromising party proceeded to elect Novatian as a bishop of their own in opposition to Cornelius, who had been chosen to that office by the majority; and they prevailed upon three bishops, whom Cornelius himself represents as very simple and unlearned men, to come from a distant part of Italy in order to take part in his consecration. Of these bishops two were afterwards deposed from their office by Cornelius, who appointed others in their places; while the third, who expressed his sorrow for

the part which he had taken in the affair, was admitted to no more than lay communion with the Church of Rome. The election of Novatian was not finally confirmed. Cyprian, and the Churches under his influence, declared against it; and in a council, consisting of sixty bishops and a large number of presbyters, which Cornelius convened on the occasion, Novatian was unanimously condemned, and the question concerning the lapsed was decided in favour of the more moderate party. The Novatians henceforward subsisted under their own leaders as a distinct sect, distinguished by their severity of discipline, until the sixth century, entitled *Cathari*, or *Puritans*.\* Their aim appears to have been to root out all immorality, and every kind of inconsistent and unbecoming conduct, from the Christian community, so that the visible Church, being perfectly pure and holy, should in this way deserve its character of the true Church, the real spiritual body of Christ on earth. This was an error of judgment on their side, amiable indeed, and arising, perhaps, from more than a mere profession of sanctity in the case of many who maintained it, but yet quite at variance with that idea of the actual Church which is given by our Saviour himself, and undoubtedly adapted to lead to that hypocrisy and spiritual pride which of themselves constitute corruption of the worst kind, and tend to introduce disorders quite as great as those which the theory endeavours to remove. At the same time it is highly probable that extreme opinions on this side had been fostered by erroneous views and practice in an opposite direction. Laxity of discipline and morals had so far prevailed as to become grave occasion of offence

\* Euseb. H. E. 6, 43, 45; Soerates, H. E. 1, 10, 13, 67; 4, 28; 5, 14; 7, 9, 11, 17, 25, 46; Sozomen, H. E. 2, 8; 7, 18, 19, &c.

to men of devout and earnest minds, with whom Christianity was a principle and power of vital spiritual godliness; and, besides this, we may conclude, from the theory which was afterwards established, that, by those who necessarily and properly rejected the Novatian standard of a true Church, another standard, equally erroneous, had been set up; mere outward unity, and a connexion with bishops in the line of apostolical succession, being supposed to constitute the essence of a Church, while other features, however good, were to be regarded rather as giving perfection and beauty to the body, than as needful to its very existence and vitality. This was substantially the scheme which was so ably advocated, and for the time triumphantly established, by Cyprian of Carthage, who employed his pen and influence with redoubled energy after the troubles which had been occasioned in his own city and at Rome by the party of Novatus and Novatian. Both these conflicting systems are, in fact, delusive and unsound. The essence of a Church consists in truth of doctrine, together with the right administration of religious ordinances, by persons duly qualified, conformably with Scripture; while other things, even the peculiar form of Church government itself, are to be regarded as accessories, valuable, indeed, and not to be despised, yet only as accessories, and as means of giving efficiency to the spiritual body. But this view of the matter appears to have been altogether overlooked, in the middle of the third century, by those who took a lead in the management of Church affairs. Unsound opinions on this subject were current, and came into collision; and at length that ecclesiastical system which was aided by the powerful influence of Cyprian, and was most accordant on the whole with the spirit of the



times, prevailed. And here was at once a strong foundation for a hierarchy, which rapidly developed itself when the Church principles of Cyprian and his party were generally established. It may administer to us a valuable lesson when we find such a man as Cyprian greatly instrumental in building up a hollow and mischievous ecclesiastical system,—a system which contributed, in due course of time, to favour the usurpation of the Papacy itself. He was a devout man, and a man of earnest mind. In his writings,—and still more in many passages, and even in the general tenor, of his life, which he eventually closed as a martyr in the cause of Christ,—we thankfully recognise a spiritual influence, and the power of true religion. But he was misled in one very important practical matter, and he contributed to mislead others. There was the want of that sound judgment in all things which every Christian ought continually to seek as an especial and most needful gift of God; and it is not impossible that there was also, unknown to himself, an indulgence of spiritual pride, or a yielding to a naturally hasty temper, which was fostered by his official position,—a position already, to a certain extent, falsified before he occupied it, and one which he tended to falsify still further. There are subtle sins against which sincere Christians,—and Christian ministers, perhaps, more than all others,—ought to stand especially on their guard. And as the evil of these sins is deeply rooted, so likewise it is wide-spreading; the failings of good men, no less than the more gross sinfulness of wicked men who occupy those posts which none but godly men are qualified to hold, possess a baneful influence, in amount and in duration, far beyond the limits of ordinary calculation.

Another lesson to be learnt from the history of Cyprian's mind relates to the subtle danger which lurks in the admixture of truth with error; and to the power which attends false doctrine when it is combined with much that is Scriptural and therefore true and good, and is clothed in glowing language from the lips of a man who appears to be under the influence of true religion. Cyprian would refer his readers to Scripture as pointedly as any faithful minister in our day can do, for the learning or verification of the great practical truths of Christianity; only he also taught them to consider views at variance with his own concerning the unity of the Church as being equivalent to the rejection of any truth that is plainly contained in the written word. He would have them read the Scriptures; but he required them to carry to the perusal his Church principles along with them.—His treatise\* “*De Unitate Ecclesiæ*” is to the following effect. He exhorts his readers to combine Christian prudence with unaffected simplicity, and especially to guard against that subtle invention of the devil, the spirit of heresy and schism. These disorders in the Church he ascribes to the want of men's adhering closely to Scripture, and to their not being duly impressed with the truth that there is but one Church, from which we separate at our peril. In order to insure the Church's unity, its divine founder built it upon the apostle Peter; although all the apostles possessed substantially the same authority. There is only one episcopate, in which each bishop

\* Mr. Shepherd regards all the writings attributed to Cyprian as a mass of forgeries, designed to support Church principles of a later date.

has his part. He who by heresy separates himself from this only true Church cannot be saved. Cyprian insists upon the oneness of the Church, on the ground that there is but one God, one Christ, one faith; that there is but one light of the sun, although shed abroad in many rays; that the coat of Christ was seamless, and that Christ himself had declared that there is but one fold and one shepherd,—with other arguments of like kind. Should any one object that the Saviour has declared that where two or three are gathered together in his name, there he is in the midst of them, he answers that this is to be understood only of the true Church and its members, of those who are united in concord and charity with the whole body, but is not to be applied to the sects which have separated themselves from it. And such separations he affirms to be a greater sin than apostasy from Christianity itself.—It is not to be supposed that Cyprian was the first inventor of these Church principles, or that the whole system was the mere production of his mind; there can be no doubt that such views had been gradually gaining ground for some time before he wrote, perhaps from the very beginning of this century; but the abilities of Cyprian, together with his high reputation for piety, contributed to reduce the theory into shape, and to give it additional currency and weight. It must, however, be carefully observed, that even Cyprian affirms, not the primacy of the bishop of Rome, but the general episcopate, to be the bond of Christian unity. In order to favour their own views, Romish writers have found it necessary to interpolate the treatise.

There is one circumstance in the history of the Novatian affair which deserves especial attention, namely, the deposition of the offending Italian bishops

by the bishop of Rome. Hence it is evident that the bishop of the capital had either for some time past exercised, or now for the first time successfully assumed, authority over the smaller Churches of the country; that he was in fact the ruler of a province. It is more than probable that the bishop of Rome had for some time past exercised a recognised jurisdiction over the rural bishops in Italy; that is to say, over the bishops of the suburbicarian provinces, or provinces adjacent to Rome, and subject to the civil governor. This metropolitan system, which was afterwards generally established in the time of Constantine, had doubtless been in the course of formation from the beginning of this century. If, however, this deposition of the Italian bishops was a first act of aggression, it was at all events a good case for such a measure, since no just ground of complaint concerning undue interference could be conceded to bishops who had themselves come from a distance with the design of interfering with the affairs of the Roman Church by assisting in the appointment of a bishop contrary to the choice of the majority. And therefore the whole aspect of the affair, so far as relates to these bishops, is bad. None of the parties concerned paid a due respect to the rights of independent Churches; the spirit of party, and an unholy struggle for power, appear too plainly on the whole face of the transaction. It is manifest that the influence of the Roman bishop must have been greatly strengthened by the result of this schism; and especially by the unanimous vote in his favour of so large a council assembled under his presidency. And the victory belonged not only to this individual bishop: it was a triumph of those principles which had already risen so extensively into repute.

After the secession of the Novatians, and when it was fully determined to restore to the communion of the Church the lapsed who should seek restoration by confession of their sins, it was resolved, partly perhaps on account of the great number of cases of this kind which occurred after the Decian persecution, that the ancient custom by which the bishop received the confession of penitents publicly, or before the whole Church, should be laid aside, and that a presbyter should be appointed to hear their confessions privately, as a preparation for the public act of receiving the penitents into communion. The appointment of such an officer (*penitentiarius*) was accepted by the great body of the Church, but of course not by the Novatians; and the office became permanent. Between the discharge of this office and the practice of receiving auricular confession, in the modern sense of the phrase, there are several points of difference; but it is obvious that the early existence of this practice and office can be urged with some degree of plausibility in defence of the modern custom, and that it may even have made way for the subsequent innovation of which that practice is a continuance.

It appears, from the letter of Cornelius concerning the Novatian affair, that the number of Christians, and even of Christian churches, in Rome, had now become very large. The ecclesiastical establishment of that city included forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, seven subdeacons, forty-two assistants, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and door-keepers; while the widows, sick, and poor, who were assisted by the alms of the Church, numbered more than fifteen hundred.

The episcopate of Stephen, the successor of Cor-

nelius, was marked by events full of significancy concerning the actual position of the Roman bishops of that period; and again disclosed, as in the case of Victor, a domineering and intolerant spirit on the part of the individual who occupied the chair. Rome and Carthage were now the principal Churches of the West, and the events of which we speak had reference to the bishops of both these communities; not, however, without a special bearing on the question with which we are more immediately concerned, the authority and temper of Rome.

At the beginning of Stephen's episcopate we find Cyprian consulting him with reference to a matter which had been submitted to his own judgment by certain Gallican bishops. The case was this. Marcian, bishop of Arles, having adopted the principles of Novatian, Faustinus of Lyons and other Gallican bishops addressed letters at once to Cyprian and to Stephen, requesting their advice as to the course of conduct to be pursued with a view to the deposition of the offenders. In these epistles, there is no recognition of any authority on the part of the bishops of Rome and Carthage; the communication is simply between colleagues and friends. But here it must be remarked that this practice of making reference or appeals to Rome, while it by no means supports the argument which the advocates of papal claims would found upon it,—inasmuch as the same appeals were made to other bishops besides the Roman,—was yet undoubtedly employed by the leaders of the Roman Church as an occasion for assuming an authority, and exercising a jurisdiction, which did not belong to them. Advantage was taken of the disorders, dissensions, or misfortunes of distant Churches, to proceed from giving

advice to interference in the arrangement of their affairs; and these acts of interference were such as to contribute to the establishment of dominion. The sins of the several Churches contributed to the great sin of spiritual despotism on the part of Rome; and it will be seen that, in this way, as well as in others, the usurpations of that see were more or less a result of the general absence or decline of vital Christianity throughout the Church. The Papacy is a worm which breeds in spiritual corruption, and fattens upon Christianity when turning to decay.

While the reference thus made to Rome and Carthage shows the position which these two Churches occupied with regard to the smaller communities of the West, it is also remarkable that Cyprian did not venture to send his reply without previously consulting his colleague at Rome; and he assigns, as a reason for this measure, that Rome ought to have precedence of Carthage on account of its magnitude.\* We shall see hereafter that it was indeed only precedence, which Cyprian conceded to the Roman bishop;† but nothing can be more clear than that he asserted for his “colleague Stephen” the primacy among bishops, on all occasions, in which several were required or disposed to act in concert.‡ In his estimation the bishop of Rome occupied the chair of Peter in the principal Church of Christendom. And on the present occasion he urges the bishop of Rome to take the lead in preserving the “unity of the Church” by advising the Gallican bishops to excommunicate Marcian, with an assurance that both Rome and Carthage would support them in this measure.

\* Cypr. Ep. 49.

† Ep. 68.

‡ Ep. 55.—Mr. Shepherd imagines that the “Epistles of Cyprian” were forged mainly with a view to introduce this matter as a supposed fact in the Church history of an earlier century.

A circumstance which occurred perhaps within a year of the foregoing makes it evident that Cyprian was prepared to act independently of Stephen, and even in opposition to him, when occasion seemed to require such a proceeding. Basilides, bishop of Leon, and (probably also) Martialis, bishop of Merida, repaired to Rome in order to obtain the influence of Stephen for restoration to their bishoprics, of which they had been deprived by the other Spanish bishops as Libellatici, that is, on account of having abjured Christianity in time of persecution. Stephen yielded to their representations, and probably admitted them to communion in his Church as a step towards the recovery of their office. Hereupon the bishops of Spain, aggrieved by the advantage gained by these two men, with whose character and proceedings they were intimately acquainted, and whom they regarded as unworthy to be retained as colleagues in their sacred office, sent a deputation with letters to the bishops of Africa, imploring their assistance and encouragement. The African bishops assembled in council at Carthage to deliberate concerning this matter; and a reply was immediately given by Cyprian\* in the name of this council to the effect that Basilides and Martialis were unworthy of the episcopal office, and that the evil of their former conduct had been aggravated by their artful proceedings at Rome. Stephen, he says, had been deceived with regard to their character; and he does not hesitate to add that any who should hold communion with the degraded bishops would be partakers in their guilt.

Another question of more general interest was agitated about this time, in which Cyprian adopted a course of conduct directly in opposition to Rome. The

\* Ep. 68.



validity of baptism administered by heretics had been formally denied by a council of African bishops at Carthage about A.D. 200, and by another, consisting chiefly of the bishops of Asia Minor, held at Iconium, A.D. 235; and the same rule of discipline had been affirmed by other councils. In the Churches of western Europe, however, it had been held that, in the case of those who had received heretical baptism, imposition of hands by the bishop was sufficient for their admission into the communion of the Church. This difference of opinion and practice had continued down to the present period, without any interruption of harmony among the dissentient Churches; and all parties were considered equally entitled, in this particular, to enjoy their Christian liberty, and to act in accordance with their own convictions. Stephen, however, treading in the steps of his predecessor Victor with reference to the paschal controversy, now made an attempt to produce a compulsory uniformity in this matter, and to make the Roman practice universal. He wrote letters to Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, and to other Asiatic bishops, declaring that he would not remain in communion with them if they should still adhere to their custom of (what he called) rebaptizing those who sought entrance into the Church from among the heretics. Firmilian encountered these threats in a spirit worthy of an independent bishop. He justly retorted the charge of schism upon Stephen himself; and we learn from the tenor of his Epistle, that he did not even recognise that precedence of rank which, as we have seen, had already been conceded to the Roman bishop in the West. "Think of the greatness of your sin," says Firmilian, "in having separated yourself from so many

of the flocks of Christ! Be not deceived; it is you who have cut yourself off from their communion, if he is the real schismatic who apostatises from his share in Church unity. While you think it is for you to exclude all others from Church communion, you do in fact simply exclude yourself. . . . You are yourself worse than all heretics." "I feel a just indignation at this open and manifest folly of Stephen, who boasts so loudly of the seat of his episcopacy, and claims to be the successor of Peter! In vain do they of Rome pretend to apostolical authority in their favour, while there are some customs in which they depart from the usage of primitive antiquity."\*

On this question Cyprian continued to maintain his decided opposition to the Roman custom. Having presided at a council of thirty-one bishops assembled at Carthage, he wrote in the name of the council to certain Numidian bishops† who had sought its decision in the matter, strongly affirming the invalidity of baptism by heretics; and maintaining that, according to their practice, they could not be charged with re-baptizing those who had, in fact, never been baptized at all. "There is but one Church," said he, "and therefore there can be but one baptism. In baptism we propose the question, Dost thou believe in eternal life, and in the remission of sins by the holy Church? And how can this inquiry have any reference to heretics, with whom is no Church, and consequently no remission of sins?" At the same time he declared himself astonished that any of his brother bishops should maintain the validity of heretical baptism. In the following year Cyprian held another council at

A. D. 254  
or 255.

A. D. 256.

\* Firmiliani Ep. inter Opp. Cypriani, Ep. 75.

† Cyp. Ep. 70, 71.

Carthage, attended by eighty-one bishops, by which the invalidity of this baptism was again maintained. Their decision on this subject was communicated to Stephen by Cyprian in a letter written in the name of all the members of the council, and containing a temperate, but firm and remarkable, vindication of their own conduct as independent bishops.\* Having expressed a hope that their pious and correct decisions would meet with the approbation of their very dear brother, they go on to say, "We know there are some who will not alter their opinions, or forego their determination, but who will continue to maintain many peculiarities which they have once adopted, yet without destroying the bond of unity between colleagues in the same office. We, for our parts, do not attempt to exercise compulsion, nor do we prescribe a law for others; each individual president of a Christian community has the free use of his own will, for which he is responsible to the Lord alone."† The answer of Stephen was overbearing and insolent in the extreme; and the messengers who conveyed the epistle from Africa were treated with the most illiberal rudeness. The bishop of Carthage was designated a false apostle and a deceitful worker; and the African Churches were either actually excluded, or at least made to hear the threat of an exclusion, from communion with the Church of Rome. During the year 256, another council was assembled at Carthage with reference to these transactions, at the opening of which Cyprian delivered an address, containing the following passage, too remarkable to be here omitted. "It now remains," said he, "that each of us deliver

\* Mr. Shepherd thinks that matter such as this was inserted in the Cyprianic forgeries in order to disarm suspicion.

† Ep. 73; conf. Ep. 76.

his opinion on this matter; but not with a view to judge any one, or to reject from our communion any who should think differently from ourselves. None of us sets up himself as an universal bishop (*episcopum episcoporum*), or seeks to coerce his colleagues into compliance by the tyranny of threats and menaces; each individual bishop being at liberty to exercise his own discretion, and being no more liable to be judged by others than he is entitled himself to pass judgment upon them. We will all rather await the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who alone has power to commit to us the government of his Church, and alone is to be regarded as the judge of our conduct." Again the assembled bishops unanimously decided in favour of the invalidity of baptism by heretics, supporting their votes by arguments for the most part in the strain of Cyprian's writings on the subject, and especially insisting on the unity of the Church and of baptism therein administered.

Cyprian transmitted an account of these proceedings to Firmilian, who in reply assured him of his concurrence, and condemned in strong terms the views and conduct of Stephen, whom he regarded as almost another Judas.

In this controversy we may be equally struck with disgust at the practical exclusiveness of Stephen, and at the theoretical intolerance of Cyprian and his party; but it is more to our present purpose to observe those features of this fact which bear upon the question of the constitution of the Church. The whole transaction clearly points to a precedence of rank already conceded to Rome in the West, although not by the Churches of the East; and at the same time it strongly shows that this concession of precedence was not supposed to attribute to the Roman bishop

any authority over Christians out of his own diocese or province, even in matters pertaining to ecclesiastical discipline. It should be particularly borne in mind that this denial of authority was made by the very men who had spoken of Stephen as the successor of St. Peter; clearly revealing the fact that this theory of succession, at the very time of its first adoption, was not supposed to involve the right of universal supremacy and government. The tendency of Cyprian's doctrine concerning Church unity is also manifest; his positions relating to this question were plausible, and his intentions good; but according to his views it is impossible to escape the conclusion that, in the full papal sense of the expression, there is no salvation out of the limits of the Church.

It has been already stated that the beginning of Valerian's reign brought repose to the persecuted Christians. This peace was, however of but short duration; Valerian renewed the persecution in the year 257, and the magistrates at Rome and elsewhere were not backward in giving full effect to his severe and sanguinary edicts. These repressive measures were directed especially against the heads and other ministers of the Churches, and against those persons of rank and influence who had joined the Christian community. And now both Stephen and Cyprian found an end of their animosities in the sufferings of an honourable martyrdom. Stephen was put to death at the very commencement of the persecution; Cyprian was banished in the course of the same year, and beheaded the year after. And Xystus, who had succeeded Stephen, after having filled his office only a few months, fell a victim to the same sanguinary measures, being put to death in company with several

A. D. 257.  
Xystus or  
Sixtus II.

of his deacons, including Laurentius, in the catacombs near Rome. Soon after this (A.D. 259) Valerian was taken prisoner by Sapor, King of Persia, by whom he was led in triumph and detained in captivity till the close of his life ten years afterwards. Upon his imprisonment he was succeeded in the empire by his son Gallienus, who immediately issued an edict for putting a stop to the persecution of the Christians. The Roman bishop who succeeded Xystus under these favourable circumstances was Dionysius. Contemporary with him was Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria; and we find that, when the latter was suspected of holding erroneous views concerning the divinity of Christ, information was laid against him before Dionysius of Rome. A synod was convened at Rome for deliberation upon this matter; and the result was that, the council not being satisfied as to the orthodoxy of the accused, the bishop of Rome despatched a letter to that effect to Alexandria. In reply, Dionysius referred to a letter which he had written in his defence, and asked for a copy of the charges preferred against him at Rome. These charges having been furnished to him, the bishop of Alexandria met them by a Refutation and Defence, in which his claim to orthodoxy was satisfactorily established. All this was in accordance with a custom, long since prevalent, that, when any complaint lay against a bishop, it was made before some other bishop of a neighbouring Church; and in this case, as the question affected the bishop of so large a Church as that of Alexandria, it was natural that it should be referred to Rome. We may therefore regard this as another instance of the rank of precedence which was now assigned to the Church esta-

A. D. 259.  
Dionysius.  
Gallienus,  
emp.

blished in the capital of the empire; and we may observe that this was now recognised from Gaul to Egypt. But here again is no mark of peculiar authority, or supreme jurisdiction, as attaching to the bishop of Rome. Dionysius did not submit to any decree or sentence issued from Rome, and we must wait yet a considerable time before we shall find that an universal judge in matters of faith was known to the constitution of the Church. It is, however, more than probable that, if Dionysius had not succeeded in establishing his reputation for soundness of doctrine to the satisfaction of the bishop of Rome and others who had assisted at the council, the result would have been that they would have declared him cut off from their communion, and that the bishop of Alexandria would have been deposed by a council convened at Alexandria. Not many years afterwards, a process of this kind was exhibited in the case of Paul of Samosata, bishop of Antioch, who, having been convicted before a council at Antioch of holding and maintaining erroneous doctrines concerning the person of the Son, was by that council excommunicated from the whole Church, and deposed.\* This council does not appear to have been attended by any European bishop; but a report of its decision was sent to the bishops of Rome and Alexandria in common with all others, (To Dionysius and Maximus, and to all bishops, priests, and deacons, our fellow-ministers throughout the world,)† giving them notice at the same time that the person with whom they should hold communion as bishop of Antioch was, not Paul, but his successor Domnus. Here it is plain that the Council of Antioch acted upon its own authority, without any

A. D. 269.

\* Euseb. H. E. 7, 27—30.

† Euseb. H. E. 7, 30.

reference to a superior at Rome. Paul, being supported by Zenobia, kept possession of his Church at Antioch for a space of three years, in opposition to the council; and continued to maintain his position there, until he was effectually deposed by the victorious Aurelian. This was perhaps the first instance in which the civil power took any part in the internal affairs of the Christian Church; and the desire of Aurelian was that Domnus should be regarded as the rightful bishop, whom the bishops of Italy, and especially the bishop of Rome, should recognise by holding communion with him.\*

The Christians were unmolested during the reign of Gallienus, which lasted till A.D. 268; nor does there appear to have been any authorised persecution under his successor Claudius. During this period, Christianity was bitterly attacked by the Platonic philosopher Plotinus, who had come to Rome as early as A.D. 245, and by Porphyry, who established himself there in 262. Porphyry went to Sicily in 268, and Plotinus died at Rome in 270. They laboured to prove that the Gospel was a mere corruption of Platonism; and Porphyry represented Pythagoras as having wrought miracles, and having imparted the power of so doing to his disciples.

In the year 270 the emperor Claudius was succeeded by Aurelian. It appears that some persecution of the Christians at Rome took place during the latter part of Aurelian's short reign; but, with this exception, the period which elapsed between the accession of this emperor and the death of Carus, including the short reign of Tacitus and Probus, may be regarded as one of almost uninterrupted tranquil-

A. D. 268.  
Claudius,  
emp.

A. D. 269.  
Felix I.

A. D.  
270-284.  
Aurelian,  
Tacitus,  
Probus,  
Carus,  
empp.

A. D. 275.  
Eutychianus.

\* Euseb. H. E. 7, 30.



lity to the Church. Dionysius was succeeded by Felix as bishop of Rome in 269, who was followed by Eutychianus in 274, and by Caius in 283. Diocletian came to the throne in 284; in 286 Maximian was associated with him in the empire, and in 292 Galerius and Constantius were made Cæsars; the latter passed over into Britain in 296. This reign was signalised by one of the most systematic and vehement persecutions which the Christians were at any time called to suffer, Constantius alone being reluctant to take part in these violent measures, and thus securing comparative tranquillity to the provinces of Gaul and Britain. In 298 an edict was published, which rendered attendance at the sacrifices compulsory on all persons holding office about the court or serving in the army; and one may judge of the number of persons affected by this edict, when we are told that the baths of Diocletian at Rome were built by Christian soldiers, who, by virtue of its provisions, were sentenced to labour at the public works as a punishment for their refusal to abjure the faith of the Gospel. In 303 another edict appeared, commanding that the Christian Churches should be destroyed and the sacred books burnt, and making it a capital crime for any person to refuse to deliver up the books on demand. Soon after, it was decreed that all Christians who occupied any public station should be discharged, that those who held no rank in the state should suffer torture and imprisonment, and that no Christian should be admitted as a plaintiff in any suit; and at the same time, all religious assemblies of Christians, even in private houses, were declared illegal. It was afterwards ordered that the heads of Churches should be imprisoned, and again, at a little later date, that

A. D. 283.  
Caius.  
A. D. 284.  
Diocletian,  
emp.

all persons whatever should be compelled to declare their adherence to the heathen religion by offering sacrifice. This scheme of oppression was rigorously fulfilled; and great were the sufferings of the Christians, by imprisonment, torture, and death, in all parts of the empire, except the provinces under the rule of Constantius. During this season of distress, Caius, bishop of Rome, was succeeded by Marcellinus; after whose death, in 304, the see appears to have remained vacant for a space of about three years.

A. D. 296.  
Marcellinus

In 305, Diocletian and Hercules having abdicated, Constantius and Galerius continued to govern as joint emperors, with Severus and Maximinus, whom Galerius had recommended as Cæsars. Constantius died at York in 306, in the presence of his son Constantine, who was immediately saluted emperor by the army, but declared himself satisfied with the title of Cæsar, which was formally conferred upon him by Galerius; and Severus was proclaimed emperor, in which dignity he was afterwards succeeded by Licinius. While these changes in the government of the empire were taking place, the Roman Church seems to have been without a bishop, and it was not until the early part of the year 308, that the office was filled up by the appointment of Marcellus. His episcopate was distinguished by a course of great, and perhaps extreme, severities towards the lapsed, which he carried on during a brief interval that occurred in the persecution then generally raging. In 310 he was succeeded by Eusebius, and then, after a short episcopate of only a few months, by Miltiades. Soon after this, in the year 311, an edict was issued giving permission to the Christians to meet in their own places of worship, and thus putting an end to the per-

A. D. 305.  
Constantius  
and  
Galerius,  
emp.

A. D. 306.  
Severus  
and  
Galerius,  
emp.

A. D. 307.  
Licinius  
and  
Galerius,  
emp.

A. D.  
305-308.  
(Roman See  
vacant.)

A. D. 308.  
Marcellus.

A. D. 310.  
Eusebius.

A. D. 311.  
Miltiades.

secution that had long raged with such unprecedented fury. The advocates of heathenism had found it impossible to maintain the ancient superstitions, either by the pen or by the sword, against the wide and overwhelming progress of the Gospel; and the great Head of the Church was now about to put a song of thanksgiving into the mouths of those who had faithfully confessed his name during a time of severe trial, and in the midst of imminent danger. After a few more acts of oppression and cruelty by Maximinus in the east, a day of not only toleration, but of earthly triumph, was to burst upon the Church. Constantine, having gained his celebrated victory over Maxentius, suddenly declared himself a Christian; edicts were published in favour of the Church; and, when Constantine came into full possession of the throne, Christianity was established as the religion of the empire.

A. D. 313.  
Constantine  
emp.

A year or two before this great event, a circumstance occurred at Carthage which ought to be noticed in this place as throwing light on the constitution of the Church at this eventful period, and on the position then occupied by the bishop of Rome. Cæcilian having been appointed bishop of Carthage in 312, his election was opposed by a party of presbyters and others, under the lead of Donatus, and was annulled by a council of seventy bishops assembled under the presidency of Secundus, the chief bishop of Numidia. The council appointed Majorinus bishop instead of Cæcilian; but Cæcilian maintained his ground at Carthage, and was recognised as the lawful bishop of that place by the other Churches of Christendom. This state of things continued for some considerable space of time, each party in the Church at Carthage

acknowledging its own bishop to the exclusion of the other; just as at Rome there was a bishop of the Novatians at the head of a large community, in contradistinction to the bishop of Rome, who was recognised as such by the majority of the members of that Church. When Constantine came to the throne as a Christian emperor, it was one of his first acts to order the payment of a sum of money to the African clergy; and in so doing he recognised Cæcilian as bishop of Carthage, by whom the distribution of this money should be made, as presiding over what was now denominated, for the first time in any public document, the Catholic Church. Hereupon the Donatists brought forward a series of charges against Cæcilian, and petitioned the emperor to refer the dispute to some Gallican bishops. Desirous of promoting unity at Carthage, Constantine so far yielded to the demands of the Donatists as to require Cæcilian, with ten bishops of his party, to repair to Rome,\* and there to confront ten bishops who favoured the pretensions of his rival. At the same time he wrote to the bishop of Rome, to three bishops in Gaul, and to certain bishops of Italy, requiring them to meet in council at Rome for the determination of the question. By this council it was resolved that the charges brought against Cæcilian were groundless, and that he was the lawful bishop of Carthage. The Donatists, however, persevered in their separation from the body over which Cæcilian presided, and, like the Novatians at Rome, were regarded as schismatics. It ought not to be overlooked that there were at this period two schismatical episcopalian Churches in the chief cities of the West. Again we perceive an instance in

\* Euseb. H. E. 10, 5.

which the internal dissensions of a foreign Church tended to give influence to the bishop of Rome ; again also it becomes plain that this bishop had not yet become primate of the universal Church ; and now also we may discover what were the first impressions and intentions of a Christian emperor concerning the mutual relations of Church and State. At the accession of Constantine, the Papacy did not exist ; but during more than a century there had been a succession of facts, both in doctrine and practice, which had begun to prepare its way.

While we have thus been employed in tracing the early ecclesiastical history of Rome, we have met with various notices of the primitive constitution of the Church, and of the modifications of that constitution which took place during the second and third centuries. We have not yet, however, made any connected and general survey of this subject ; and it may be well to do this before we pass on to a consideration of the age of Constantine and his successors.

After the death of the apostles, their place as chief directors of Church affairs was occupied by the presiding presbyter, or bishop, in the several congregations ; and it appears that even at this early date, before the close of the first century, every large and organised Church was governed and instructed by a bishop or chief ruler, together with several presbyters, who formed his council or body of assistants ; while the distribution of alms, and, perhaps, the management of other temporal affairs belonging to the spiritual body, was in the hands of deacons ; all these officers

having been elected by the whole body of believers which formed the Church or congregation, but not having been admitted to the exercise of their functions without the sanction of an apostle, or of some who had already exercised the office of bishop or presbyter under apostolic authority. In a large city, where several Churches were formed, with their respective presbyters and deacons, the chief government of the whole body was vested in only one bishop, whose council in that case consisted of the presbyters attached to all the congregations; while, for the enactment of any new laws, or the making of any regulations affecting the whole body, the votes of all were taken. A body of believers thus organised, and consisting of several congregations in the midst of a large heathen population, could not but have a missionary character, and proceed to missionary work. The Christians of Rome preached the Gospel, not only within the confines of the city where they dwelt, but also in the neighbouring towns and villages; and it soon became a custom to send out from the larger communities one or more presbyters for the express purpose of making converts and of forming Churches, on a small scale, but in conformity with the model already adopted. The missionary presbyter naturally found himself at the head of the new Church; and, while still no more than a presbyter with respect to the parent Church at Rome, he became the president or bishop of the affiliated community. Several such Churches, or rural bishoprics, arose, during the second century, in the neighbourhood of Rome; and the bishops of these Churches, probably alone, represented their several communities in the great ecclesiastical council of presbyters at Rome,

where they met under the presidency of the Roman bishop as the acknowledged head of the whole body. These Churches were, in fact, incorporated with that of Rome, and their bishops were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the larger city. Such suburban or rural bishoprics in connexion with Rome were those of Tusculum and Præneste, Tibur and Veletæ, Ostia and Portus, in the second century; and before the end of the third century the jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome extended over all the suburbicarian provinces, that is to say, all those provinces of Italy which were subject to the civil governor called Vicarius urbis, including the greater part of central Italy, all the south, and, perhaps, also Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica. The third century, indeed, witnessed the gradual formation of that metropolitan system by which the bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and afterwards Constantinople, were regarded as the presiding or chief bishops of four large provinces, embracing the whole of Christendom.

It may not, perhaps, be correct to say that during the second century all the Churches of small towns or country places were regularly affiliated to some large city Church, or incorporated in a diocesan system; and it is probable that some, especially such as did not owe their origin to any missionary from such larger Church, retained their independence; but it may be safely affirmed that, as the ordinary process of evangelization was by the teaching of presbyters or other Christians from the larger communities, so the prevailing system of Church formation and government, at that period, included a subordinate connexion with some mother Church.

Nor does it appear that the subordination of rural

bishops to their metropolitans was formally and legally established during the second and third centuries; it was merely a conventional matter, arising from the circumstances of the case, and tacitly acquiesced in by the inferior party, as being in accordance with its relative position and influence in the Church; so that in this case, as in many others, law was but the ratification or exponent of a custom previously established, or arising from the nature of things. It seems probable that, subsequently to the middle of the second century, the jurisdiction of the chief bishop of a district, such as the bishop of Rome, although not formally established, was practically of a more decided character, and coupled with a larger measure of authority, than in earlier times. These bishops were not yet styled metropolitans, but primates, *primi*, or *primæ sedis episcopi*. Their privileges of primacy consisted in the right of summoning the bishops of the province to a council, in order to deliberate on matters affecting the interests of the whole Church of the province,—the right of presiding in such assemblies when convened,—and, in the intervals between the assembling of such councils, the right of judicature in causes which related to any individual bishop of the province;—while it was also a settled custom that no provincial bishop should be consecrated or fully admitted to his office until his election had been confirmed or approved by his superior.

We have no authentic account of the assemblies of ecclesiastical Synods or Councils before the end of the second century; but it is possible that assemblies of this kind may have been convened, with more or less form and regularity, at a still earlier date. The first councils of which any record has come down to



us were occasioned by the dispute concerning the time of celebrating Easter, between the Churches of the East and West, which broke out at the end of the second century. It was supposed that the best way to settle this dispute would be by a conference of bishops, who should come to an understanding on this subject, and agree to celebrate Easter in their own churches on the same day. Hence the first councils at Ephesus, at Jerusalem, in Pontus, and at Rome. Not that such councils were at that time supposed to possess any inherent authority binding upon the conscience of Christendom; the assembling of these synods, and submission to their decisions, were regarded in the light of expediency, rather than as a matter of right and duty.

These simple and informal gatherings were followed, however, about the middle of the third century, by the regular institution of provincial synods, convened in a more systematic way, and having more definite objects in view. This institution appears first on the face of history as having been established within the confines of ancient Greece: whence it has been conjectured by some writers (while others do not favour the supposition) that the system was suggested by the old Aehæan confederacy, or, at all events, that it embodied the spirit of that celebrated league. These synods were held at regular periods, once or twice a year; and the bishops of the district were bound to attend them, under the presidency of the primate. It is probable that, even in the third century, presbyters and deacons had a seat and voice in these assemblies together with the bishops.

These councils obviously tended at once to consolidate the metropolitan system and to increase the

power of individual bishops in their respective dioceses. The bishops appeared in these assemblies as the representatives or delegates of their Churches, and were regarded as acting in their name; and, from the idea of deliberating concerning the affairs of the province, the transition was easy to that of making laws which should be binding on the whole; the minority of members in each council of course consenting to yield to the decision of the greater part. Besides this, when laws, passed in a council of bishops, obtained unhesitating submission and acceptance throughout a province, it was natural that each bishop, possessing as he did the character and dignity of a member of this principal body, should think it nothing beyond the range of his authority to act singly as a legislator within his own diocese.

Hence also, perhaps, to a great extent, proceeded that idea of the unity of the Church by universal adherence to one outward communion, which, as we have seen, gained ground about the middle of the third century, under the fostering care of certain teachers of that day, especially Cyprian. Hence also arose the custom of communicating synodal decrees, not only to the Church of a neighbouring province, but sometimes, when the decree related to an important matter of doctrine, even to communities the most remote,—the custom of notifying the election of a bishop, together with the transmission of his confession of faith, to all other bishops,—and the legalised practice of giving *literæ formatæ*, or certificates of Church membership, to Christians, especially to the clergy travelling from one diocese to another. The last-mentioned practice had become highly necessary when the number of professed Christians was

greatly multiplied, in order to guard against impostors who might otherwise have pleaded Church membership in order to obtain alms or subsistence; also in times of persecution, as a precaution against the intrusion of spies or informers; and amidst the prevalence of sects and heresies, as a means of effectually excluding from communion those who may have departed from the Catholic faith. In pursuance of the same system, notices were sent to neighbouring Churches, and sometimes even to Churches at a distance, of persons excommunicated by any particular community. These customs, in accordance with the Cyprianic idea of the unity of the Church, were partly derived from ancient times; but, to whatever date they belonged, it is obvious that they materially tended to assist the development of that idea, and to confirm what they had no doubt contributed to suggest and recommend.

But the doctrine of the unity of the Church, as held by Cyprian and others in the third century, did not imply a recognition of one universal head of Christendom upon earth, in the person either of the Romish bishop, or of any other. Every single Church, or every united provincial Church, was still regarded as independent of all others; and all together were considered as constituting one whole, simply as being animated by one faith, governed by one Spirit, called to the same hope, and rendering allegiance to one invisible sovereign Lord.

Still, however, at this early period, the bishops of Rome enjoyed considerable distinction, and were often found striving for pre-eminence and power; communication with them was eagerly sought, their advice perpetually asked, and often willingly and closely fol-

lowed ; they were not unfrequently chosen as umpires for the settlement of disputes ; and some Churches in distant localities recognised the bishop of Rome as their superior in preference to the bishop of their own metropolis,—a liberty of choice, in this respect, being conceded, while the metropolitan system was only in course of formation.

This regard was paid to the bishop of Rome as presiding over the largest see, and at the same time one of the most ancient, in the very seat of empire, and the centre of the civilised world. During the first three centuries little respect was paid to him as the alleged successor of St. Peter : and even if this had been taken into account, it would not have contributed to attach to him a character of superiority over all other bishops ;\* for it was at that time distinctly held that St. Peter, although first of the apostles in rank, possessed no honour, power, or authority over the rest, who were entirely his equals. In the second and third centuries, the Church of Rome must always have been an object of peculiar interest to the rest of Christendom, as indicating the favourable or unfavourable treatment which the Church in general was likely to receive at the hands of the government ; and, during times of partial persecutions in the provinces, the bishops, clergy, and private Christians of Rome were in a condition to afford shelter or to render other services to their distressed brethren, such as could nowhere else be found. In wealth, intelligence, and numbers, this Church must have surpassed all others. Precedence in rank was conceded to the Roman bishops ; and, as far as their own pretensions went, they claimed that the faith of

\* Cyprian, Ep. 71 ; and De Unit. Eccles.

the Church of Rome should be regarded as normal by all other Churches, and that those Churches ought to conform to this pattern, because the primitive traditions may have been supposed to have been preserved with the greatest purity in this ancient and important apostolical see. This was all that Stephen claimed from Cyprian and other bishops. And even when Victor "excommunicated" the Asiatic bishops, he did not claim the right of exercising an act of jurisdiction which belonged to a superior, but merely performed an act of exclusion from the communion of his own Church,—an act which every bishop was entitled, and even bound, to perform with regard to those who, in his judgment, were convicted of heresy.

During the latter end of the second century, and in the course of the third, the system of ecclesiastical discipline was refined and carried out with increased strictness, particularly with respect to the admission of members, the suspension or excommunication of offenders, and the penitential observances required in order to readmission, especially of the lapsed. And all these arrangements tended to confirm the idea of high privilege attaching to communion with the Church.

The increase of Church members naturally and necessarily led to a corresponding increase in the number of Church officers. Even before the end of the second century some Churches possessed no fewer than twenty or thirty presbyters, and as many deacons; although in some large Churches (*e. g.*, that of Rome) the deacons were restricted to the primitive number—seven. Not only was the number of original Church officers increased, but new offices were established; and we now read of subdeacons,

acolyths, readers, exorcists, and doorkeepers (our pew-openers, and bedells or sextons), in addition to bishops, priests, and deacons. The necessity of this augmentation arose not simply from the increase of members, but also (especially in the case of acolyths and exorcists) from the multiplication of ceremonies.

These Church officers, forming now so numerous a body, began to be affected by an *esprit de corps*. They began, as we have seen, to form a kind of separate caste in the Church, and their relation to the general body thus became greatly, although imperceptibly, modified and changed. Such a body of men, already become to a certain extent distinct from the rest, transacting so much business of the whole society, and standing in so important a relation to it, found itself possessed of considerable influence and power; and this power it naturally sought to consolidate and enlarge.

One means by which power was thrown into the hands of the clergy was that which has already been noticed, the confounding of the idea of the Christian ministry with that of the Jewish priesthood. The apostles had taught that while the Lord Jesus Christ is the spiritual high priest of our profession, all believers, as such, are spiritual antitypes of the Jewish priests, being entitled to offer spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving and obedience, rendered acceptable to God through the mediation of the Redeemer. This priestly character, in truth, appertains to all Christians alike, without any distinction of class or order. And, in the same manner, the whole body of believers was originally regarded as the *cleros*, the lot or inheritance, of the Lord. But during the

second and third centuries a new set of ideas on these points became prevalent. The ministers of the Church, instead of the members generally, began now to be looked upon especially, and at length exclusively, as the *cleros*, or clergy. And more particularly, this favoured body was supposed to bear exclusive resemblance to the Jewish priesthood, and even to be the actual successors of that select body in the new and higher dispensation of the Gospel; so that, while the deacons and inferior officers occupied the place of Levites and other subordinates in the Jewish system, the presbyters came to be regarded as the true sacerdotes or sacrificing priests, and the bishops as *Principes Sacerdotum*, or high priests, according to divine institution, in the system of the Gospel.\*

In this way it was boldly and distinctly announced that the clergy formed a separate class or caste,—that they held their offices by the direct institution and authority of God, not at all through the medium of the Church,—that their services were indispensable for the performance of religious worship, and for the communicating of heavenly grace and blessing,—that they were, in short, no less than necessary mediators between God and man.

At the same time new ideas were successfully propagated, greatly in favour of the clergy and of bishops in particular, respecting the nature and import of apostolic succession. As early as the beginning of

\* Tertullian is the first who applies to bishops the term *Summi Sacerdotes* (*De Baptism.* c. 17), and *Summi Pontifices* (*De Pudicit.* c. 1). But even he could say *Nome et laici sacerdotes summi?* (*De Exhort. Cast.* c. 7). Cyprian fully developed the idea of the Christian priesthood of the clergy after the pattern of the Jewish. (*Epp.* 3, 4, 45, 52, 55, 59, 65, 69.)

the second century, the bishops had been denominated successors of the apostles; and they were rightly so called, as having become, in their place, after their departure from the world, the supreme governors of the Churches upon earth, and that too, we may safely affirm, in accordance with apostolic institution. But the idea subsequently introduced was something different from this. The apostles possessed the extraordinary power of imparting spiritual gifts to believers; and it was now pretended that in the bishops of the Church this power was to a certain extent perpetuated,—perpetuated, that is, so far as to qualify the bishops, in a special manner, to impart those gifts which were supposed to be needful for the discharge of the priestly office. And the act of ordination, or laying on of hands,—which, in apostolic times and in accordance with apostolic institution, was a solemn act of introduction to the ministerial office, whereby its duties were formally devolved upon certain individuals, the requisite authority to discharge that office was imparted, and its rights and privileges were secured to them,—was now regarded rather as the act by which, and by which alone, grace and ability to discharge those functions were conveyed to the recipient, and thus as the indispensable and only appointed means or instrument of making over the sacerdotal gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost.

During the second and third centuries, various marks and observances were introduced for denoting the distinction between the clergy and laity. Thus, in the sacred edifices, a special place was assigned to the clergy, which Eusebius\* designates as being inac-

\* H. E. lib. 10, c. 4.



cessible to the multitude,—obedience was made to a bishop or presbyter by a layman when the parties accidentally met in public,—and the whole ecclesiastical order was supposed to be invested with such a peculiar sanctity that actions which were lawful in a layman were regarded as unlawful in a member of the clerical body. And during this period it came to be received as a settled maxim that no layman ought to presume to teach or preach in the Christian assemblies in presence of the clergy. At the beginning of the third century, Demetrius of Alexandria found fault with the bishops of Palestine for their admission of Origen to preach, on the ground that it was an unheard-of thing for laymen to preach in the presence of bishops; but the bishops were then able to adduce examples to the contrary.\*

When once the laity were accustomed thus to regard the clergy as a class of men superior to themselves, it was easy to establish the idea that they also possessed the right of dominion; and it was to this spiritual despotism, in point of fact, that so many of the opinions and usages of this period were directly and rapidly tending.

As early as the second century, the bishops were seeking to exalt themselves unduly above the presbyters. Still, however, even as late as the middle of the third century, their power was to a certain extent limited and restricted by that of the presbyters, who continued to form the bishop's standing council, and to share administration with him. But the introduction of new and inferior orders of the ministry

\* See Euseb. H. E. 6, 19. We do not find any law on this subject anterior to the fourth synod of Carthage, A.D. 398. "Laicus, presentibus clericis, nisi illis jubentibus, docere non audeat."

facilitated the eventual subjection of presbyters to the bishops; the presbyters being compensated for their loss of power on the one hand by the grant of power and superiority on the other, and the independence of the bishops appearing to harmonise with the whole system of subordination which was so extensively introduced.\*

Now also was laid the foundation of a custom that no person should be admitted to the higher orders of the clergy who had not previously belonged to the lower; a custom not yet universally prevalent, and still less sanctioned by express enactment, but one which evidently tended to consolidate the clerical body, and to promote its influence, while it softened the repugnance of the presbyters to the loss of their ancient privileges, and to the increased authority of the bishops. In the Churches of Africa this custom was, perhaps, firmly established before the close of the third century. Such an arrangement could not but materially contribute to the compactness of the hierarchical system; and it included a pledge that no person should fill the highest offices in the Church who might not be reasonably supposed to have become thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the ecclesiastical order, and conversant with all the details of clerical duty.

It is obvious that the influence and independence of the bishops were greatly promoted, during the second and third centuries, by the convening and working of provincial Councils. In these assemblies the bishops were, if not the only, yet certainly the leading, members. While attending them, the

\* Hence the distinction of *Ordines majores et minores*,—*potestativi et ministrantes*,—*sacri et non sacri*.

bishops of the several dioceses in a province met and became acquainted with each other; and hence they were in a position to establish a confederacy which no inferior power in the Church could long resist. If a presbyter, or even a whole Church, had any disagreement with a bishop, the ultimate appeal lay only to a General Council,—that is, from one bishop to the whole body of his brethren throughout the province, men of his own rank, who felt their interests to be identical with his with whom they had been personally acquainted, and who would naturally be unwilling to act against him, while, to the obscure parties who had ventured to dispute his authority or to resist his will, they were, and were likely for ever to be, strangers.

Still, however, the power of the bishops was to a certain extent held in check during the third century, not only by the presbyters, but even by the laity, who continued to retain some of their ancient privileges. Thus the voice of the laity was still required in order to the excommunication of an offender, or the restoration of a penitent; such an act could not yet be performed by the single authority of the bishop.\*

By degrees it had been brought about that the deacons were appointed by the mere nomination of the bishop; and the inferior orders which were established at this time were from the very first placed entirely at his disposal. But, even to the end of this period, the laity continued to retain a considerable share of their original rights in the election of bishops and presbyters. The right of the election of bishops, especially, appears to have remained in

\* Cyp. Ep. 34; Ib. Ep. 12, 30, 55, 59.

the hands of the people, or whole body of the Church, with only partial abatement, until the close of the third century, and even for some time afterwards. The clergy must have already begun to feel that in this circumstance there was something derogatory to the whole order, and that, while the people continued to have such a share in appointing the chief ecclesiastical rulers, they could hardly feel sufficiently impressed with the conviction that the power and authority of these rulers, and of the clergy generally, came directly from heaven. Besides this, as soon as bishoprics became objects of eager desire, it is obvious that this mode of appointment by general election must have given rise to manifold abuses; and we know that, in point of fact, canvassing for the episcopal office not unfrequently occasioned factions and disturbances, and sometimes led to grievous schisms. Accordingly, we find that by degrees a preponderating influence in the election of bishops was given, partly to the clergy of the diocese, and partly to the other bishops of the province, especially to the chief bishop, who was eventually distinguished as the metropolitan. Besides this, the approbation of the other bishops of the province, and the confirmation of the metropolitan, came to be considered indispensable to the validity of an election. These customs were introduced only by degrees during the third century; and it is obvious that until they were thoroughly established and inwrought into the ecclesiastical constitution by force of precedents and law, the power of the bishops and clergy over the people was subject to considerable restriction.

Another great impediment to the absolute power of the clergy during this period lay in the circum-

stance of their still being dependent on the people for their means of subsistence. This custom was established in the apostolic Church: and it appears that, throughout the second century, voluntary offerings continued to be made by the members of the Church, chiefly in articles of food and other necessaries, partly for the support of the ministers, and partly for the relief of the poor. At the beginning of the third century, we find traces of a monthly payment of money, deposited in the treasury of the Church (*corbona, concha*) on the first Sunday of every month, destined chiefly for the support of the clergy; and in the larger Churches, such as those of Rome, Alexandria, Carthage, and Ephesus, these payments were doubtless very considerable. It appears that, in the course of that century, a custom gradually grew up, which was afterwards established by law, that, of the whole revenue of a Church, one third was given to the bishops, one third to the rest of the clergy, and the remainder to the poor.

An institution such as this, while it doubtless made ample provision for the support of the clergy, must have tended at the same time to retain them in a kind of dependence upon the favour of the people; and it is probable that the monthly revenue varied in amount according to the greater or less popularity of the bishops and their clergy.

## CHAPTER II.

FROM CONSTANTINE THE GREAT TO GREGORY I.

WHATEVER may have been the motives by which Constantine was influenced in establishing Christianity as the religion of the empire, certain it is that he employed zealous and persevering efforts for the propagation and advancement of the newly-adopted faith. In Rome itself a large proportion of the people, if not the majority, were still heathen; and especially the higher class of citizens adhered to the old religion: but, notwithstanding the unpopularity of his measures among this portion of his subjects, the emperor steadily adhered to his policy of seeking the overthrow of the ancient superstition, and of promoting the interests of the Christian faith and worship, according to the ideas at that time prevalent in the Church. One of his first acts in this direction was the granting of extensive immunities to ecclesiastical persons, Church officers of even the lowest grade being declared exempt from the burden and expense of those civil offices to which their fellow-citizens were liable. This regulation gave rise to many complaints, and led to various disorders. It soon became a practice for the

more wealthy citizens to undertake some of the inferior offices of the Church for the sake of the immunities attached to them; and a remedy was sought for this state of things, by a subsequent enactment (A. D. 326) that no person who was liable to serve certain public offices should enter the ministry of the Church, which was declared open only to persons of small means who could be properly supported out of the ecclesiastical revenues; and it was at the same time provided that no Church appointment or nomination should take place except in the case of a real vacancy. It is probable, also, that the clergy were to a considerable degree exempted from the payment of taxes; and it is certain that Constantine laid the foundation of the great wealth which the Church afterwards possessed, by some donations of money, corn, and land,—by appropriating a portion of the public revenue to the use of the clergy,\*—and especially by an enactment which gave unlimited licence to testamentary bequests in favour of the Church. These possessions and sources of revenue were designed partly for the use of the clergy,† partly for the assistance of the poor and the support of widows and virgins, and partly for the building and repair of ecclesiastical edifices; but the bishops and clergy had the oversight and distribution of the whole. The decisions of bishops in civil matters were now formally legalized and declared valid,‡ the executive being commanded to carry them into effect. Facilities were given for the manumission of slaves by the clergy in the presence of the congregation,§ by which

\* Euseb. H. E. 10, 6; Sozomen, H. E. 1, 8; 5, 5.

† Cod. Justin. 1, 2, 1.

‡ Sozomen, H. E. 1, 9.

§ Cod. Justin. 1, 13.

means the process was made more simple and eligible than when accomplished with the old formalities before the civil magistrates. The old Roman laws for the encouragement of marriage were abrogated, clearly with a view to favour the growing practice of clerical and monastic celibacy. The observance of the Lord's day (now called by its old heathen name Sunday), as a period of rest from worldly occupation, was enjoined, with certain exceptions, by an edict of A. D. 321; and it was provided that on this day even the heathen soldiers should perform an act of public worship, by repeating a set form of prayer, addressed to the one God. A law was made for the restoration of confiscated property to Christian confessors, and to the descendants of Christian martyrs. Heathen sacrifices and modes of worship were, to a certain extent, although not yet universally and absolutely, prohibited. By order of the government, heathen temples were in some places destroyed, in others closed, or left unoccupied and exposed to ruin and decay; a command which was in many instances willingly obeyed by the people in their zeal for the overthrow of idolatry, while in other instances it could be carried into execution only in the presence of a military force. Images of heathen deities were destroyed and mutilated, and frequently were dragged from the recesses of their temples, and exposed to the contempt of the people. The estates and revenues of heathen temples were freely confiscated. In some cases, the poor were bribed to make a confession of Christianity by gifts of money.\* Privileges were granted to small towns when their whole population embraced the Christian religion; and the foundation of new Rome

\* Euseb. H. E. 3, 38.



(Constantinople), although dictated perhaps by various motives of state policy or ambition on the part of the emperor, may be traced in some measure to his desire of possessing an exclusively Christian capital. It is painfully evident that many of the conversions from heathenism to Christianity which took place under this system must have been unreal and unsatisfactory to the last degree; and that the corruption of morals, already so extensively existing in the Church, was likely to be greatly aggravated in this season of princely favour and temporal prosperity.

But, without stopping to inquire more particularly into the religious and moral effects of the change which had taken place in the fortunes of the Church, it is our province to consider rather the relations of Church and State under the new system, and especially to watch the exercise of civil and ecclesiastical authority. The Church for some time past had been a large corporation, and had latterly been an extensive confederacy within the State, notwithstanding the absence of countenance or support on the part of its rulers; and although this society was constituted for spiritual purposes, and had reference to the exercise of religion and to the rights of conscience, yet it was impossible in the nature of things that it should not possess that element of temporal influence and power which is inseparable from the association or confederacy of large numbers of men for any purpose whatever. This power had, in fact, become so formidable, that the civil government found it necessary to conciliate rather than to oppose it, to recognise and legalise rather than to attempt any longer to crush it. Whether or not the Christian Church ought to have assumed this attitude; whether it was right that it

should have become an *imperium in imperio*, or should have existed at all as a compact body politic, under the command of a few leaders, and coextensive in its ramifications with the limits of the empire itself; whether this state of things is to be traced to the spirit of worldly ambition and the operation of an earthly policy in the Church, contrary to the precepts and designs of its Divine head and founder; or whether it ought rather to be regarded as the necessary result of that posture of self-defence which the Church was obliged for a long time to assume, and therefore as a due retribution for those cruel persecutions formerly carried on against the Christians in their harmless capacity of unoffending citizens, whose only crimes were a refusal to join in idolatrous worship and a determination to worship God in spirit and in truth according to the Gospel;—these are questions which, although of grave moment, do not properly belong to our present investigation. They are theological rather than historical, and must be decided according to the evidence of Scripture relative to the real nature and constitution of the Christian Church. But there are some strictly historical questions, of great importance, which now call for our attention. What was the political position of the Church, and especially of the Church of Rome? How far did the new state of things promote or retard the growth of the papacy? Was the Church recognised as a corporation independent of the State; and, if not, how far did the State interfere in the management of its affairs, or in the control of its operations? Now, the whole tenor of authentic history plainly reveals the fact that in Constantine the Church found, not only a patron, but, what she had evidently begun

to require, a sovereign. And yet at the same time it is equally clear that the circumstances of the times, taken altogether, contributed, not to overwhelm or even weaken the ecclesiastical power, but rather to strengthen the influence of the Church rulers, and to pave the way for papal domination. Constantine was supreme in all causes, ecclesiastical as well as civil; yet he so dealt with ecclesiastical affairs as to bring about the subsequent transference of that supremacy from the Throne to the Church. He gave into the hands of the Church rulers so large a share of political influence and power, that in the declining period of the empire they were able to take advantage of the weakness of the Crown, and to trample upon the necks of princes.

We must now take a survey of the position of Constantine, in his imperial relations with the Church. The laws above enumerated exhibit him to us as her patron; let us now consider his acts and his course of policy as her governor. There can be no doubt that Constantine regarded himself, from the moment of his adoption of Christianity, in the light of what we are accustomed to call the temporal head of the Church. His own words, and the expressions employed by the historians of his life and reign, contain an explicit declaration of this fact. On one occasion, we are told, when the emperor was entertaining certain bishops at a banquet, he politely remarked to them that he himself was a bishop. "You," said he, "sustain that office, as to the internal affairs of the Church, and I for my part may well be called a bishop, as being divinely appointed to preside over it in externals." "And his mind on this subject," adds the historian, "was in accordance with his professions;

for he really acted the part of a bishop towards all his subjects, exciting them to the utmost of his power to lead a godly life.”\* Eusebius in another place observes concerning him, that “he took especial care of the Church of God, and when dissensions existed amongst its members in different provinces, he convened councils of God’s ministers, acting in the capacity of one who had been divinely appointed as the common bishop; nor did he disdain to be present in their assemblies and to take part in their deliberations, with the view to the promotion of religious peace.”† “From the time that the emperors became Christians,” says Socrates, “the affairs of the Church were under their control; and General Councils were convened, as they are still convened, at their will.‡ And if we ask what was the distinction which Constantine drew between the internal and external affairs of the Church, we shall find, upon consulting the history of his proceedings, that his attention to externals included everything except the administration of ecclesiastical offices, the preaching of the word, and the performance of religious rites and ceremonies; in all matters relating to Church government the emperor being ostensibly and legally supreme. There can be no doubt that in his decisions and his acts he was guided by the advice, or even unknowingly led by the plots and machinations, of the bishops; but this was only in the same way as other princes have been swayed by favourites of a different order,

\* Euseb. De Vit. Constant. 4, 24. It may here be observed, once for all, that this Life of Constantine, purporting to have been written by Eusebius, is by some persons regarded as spurious.

† Euseb. De Vit. Constant. 1, 44.

‡ Socrat. H. E. lib. 5, proœm.

and his subserviency implied neither a misapprehension of his imperial position nor a surrender of his legal rights. The bishops and clergy were for a season content with this possession of influence at court; and the people, who had long since resigned their original power into the hands of the presbytery, and had seen the authority of the presbyters absorbed in the power of the episcopate, could not take any exception to the lodgment of ecclesiastical supremacy in the imperial crown. Indeed, the more discerning members of the laity, and the inferior orders of clergy, might have been well prepared to hail the imperial supremacy as a protection, or even as the only effectual protection, against the dominion of the hierarchy and the disorders incident to the conflicting interests of rival or antagonistic bishops.

There were many ways in which Constantine exercised his unquestionable right of supremacy in ecclesiastical causes and over ecclesiastical persons. He issued commissions for the decision of Church controversies, and sometimes presided in such courts; he sometimes made appointments to ecclesiastical offices, and at other times deposed or otherwise punished clerical offenders. Councils were convened only with his consent; he sometimes presided over their deliberations; and their decrees were not valid without his imperial ratification. These ecclesiastical assemblies had hitherto been simply provincial, convened under the presidency of the chief bishop of the province, and framing their decrees for execution only within its limits; Constantine convened the first General Council, to which bishops from every province were summoned, and which enacted laws under the imperial sanction, equally binding on all Churches

throughout the empire. This measure directly tended to the consolidation of ecclesiastical power, and contributed to increase the personal influence of some of the bishops; inasmuch as, on the one hand, a General Council, in its corporate capacity, was charged with legislative power on a more extensive scale than had hitherto existed, and, on the other, according to the nature of large deliberative assemblies, the course of its proceedings was practically determined by a few leading members, who had already for the most part attained some eminence by their personal abilities and character, or who were conspicuous for the dignity or importance of their station. The veneration which Constantine felt for the decision of councils was therefore, in point of fact, nothing more or less than a devoted attachment to a leading section of the priesthood. And it is easy to see how well the hierarchy could afford to recognise the emperor's supremacy in matters of religion, when we find him declaring on one occasion that "everything which is done in the sacred assemblies of the bishops is in conformity with the will of God,"\* and, at another time, that "the decision of the priests must be treated with the same respect as if the Lord himself had been present to announce it. For they cannot think or judge otherwise than as they have been instructed by Christ."† Above all, the most zealous advocates of Church power may have been well satisfied when they found the canons of councils invested with the authority of civil law, and thus made universally binding on the people. "A great error was now committed by Constantine," says a modern writer on Church history. "He made the decrees and canons of Nicæa a part of

\* Euseb. Vit. Constant. 3, 20.

† Conc. Arelat. 314.

the imperial and civil law. The decrees of the council respecting the divinity of Christ might have been made the doctrine and creed of the universal Church; its decisions respecting the discipline of the Churches might have been received as the canons or ecclesiastical rules of the universal Church; and both the doctrines and canons which were now promulgated as the conclusions of the council might have been regarded by Christians as binding on their consciences; the denial of their doctrines, or the violation of their enacted discipline, might have still been punished by excommunication only, as before the conversion of Constantine; but the edicts of the emperor changed the spiritual offences into political crimes, and thus laid the foundation of all the subsequent persecutions."

.... "The enactments of emperors that the canons of councils should be recognised as part of the civil law of the empire constituted new crimes, erected new tribunals, changed man into a demon towards his fellow-men, gradually checked the energy of intellect, perpetuated the reign of ignorance, discouraged the love of knowledge, superseded Scripture, encouraged the opposite extremes to discipline by rendering the very name of discipline hateful to the reasoning and the zealous; and did all this by making heresy, which God, and not man, should punish, a crime against the State as well as against the Church; and by constituting the heretic a traitor to his temporal prince, as well as to the spiritual Church and to his Master in heaven."\*

The removal of the seat of empire to Constantinople was an event highly favourable to the extension of ecclesiastical power in the hands of the bishops of

\* Townsend, Ecclesiastical and Civil History, book 2, ch. 4.

Rome. The grounds on which precedence of rank had been conceded to the Roman Church were not affected by the absence of the court; while the rulers of that Church, not being kept in check by the presence of the supreme governor, found ample opportunity of strengthening their own influence, and securing to themselves a portion of political power which they might otherwise have found it difficult to acquire. Constantine did not formally make those donations, and delegate that power to the bishops of Rome, which have been pretended in forgeries of a later date; but practically he went far towards accomplishing this transfer, by opening a wide door for the entrance of a potentate who was ready to take to himself what would be afterwards represented as having been bestowed on him by the bounty or devotion of the emperor.

A. D. 314.  
Silvester.

To proceed with our history. The Donatists having complained of the decision which had been made against them by the council formerly held at Rome, Constantine convened a large Western Council for the further consideration of their cause, to meet at Arles, in the year 314. This council was attended by a hitherto unusually large number of bishops, Constantine himself defraying the expenses of their journey. Either the emperor, or Marinus, the bishop of Arles, presided; Silvester, bishop of Rome, was not present, but he sent two presbyters and two deacons as his representatives. This council repeated the condemnation of the Donatists; and transmitted a copy of its canons to Silvester, accompanied by an epistle, expressing the wish of the assembled bishops that their "dear brother" could have been present, and assigning as a reason for sending their decrees to him, that,



inasmuch as he was at the head of the largest diocese, he would be better able than any other bishop to make them extensively known, and to obtain for them a general acceptance. In this matter we again see respect paid to the Roman bishop on account of the importance of his Church; while it is yet clear that other bishops were independent of him, and that the power of assembling ecclesiastical councils was vested in the emperor. The Donatists afterwards appealed to the emperor himself, who still decided in favour of Cæcilian, and proceeded even to take away the churches of the Donatists.

Still more remarkable and instructive, with reference to these points, is the history of the first General Council which met at Nicæa, in Bithynia, in the year 325. The assembling of this council was regarded by Constantine as a great healing measure, by which he hoped to put an end to the Meletian schism, in which bishop was arrayed against bishop and one part of the people against another, in Egypt,—to settle the question concerning the observance of Easter, which had still continued to be an occasion of difference between the Churches of the West and some Churches of the East,—to reunite the Novatians to the confederate (Catholic) Church,—to make certain extensive regulations relating to Church government and discipline,—and, above all, to put a termination to the Arian controversy, which had by this time given rise to great distractions in the Churches of the East. To this council bishops from all parts of the empire, numbering about a thousand in the East, and eight hundred in the West, were summoned; but, when assembled, it was found to consist almost exclusively of Orientals, Hosius of Corduba (Cordova) in Spain being the only

Council  
of Nicæa,  
A. D. 325.

western bishop present, together with two presbyters who attended as representatives of Silvester, bishop of Rome. The council was attended by about three hundred bishops, with many presbyters and other followers, amounting in the whole to about two thousand; its Oriental character may be accounted for, partly by its locality, and partly by the circumstance that the chief questions to be discussed related to affairs in which the Churches of Africa and the East were especially concerned. Here the tenets of Arius were almost unanimously condemned, and a sound Confession of Faith, in opposition to his errors, was agreed upon;—the observance of Easter was fixed according to the usage of the West; and henceforward those Christians who adhered to the Jewish custom of Asia Minor formed a party distinct from the Catholic Church (Quartodecimani);—a decree was passed for the submission of the Meletian bishops and clergy to the bishop of Alexandria upon favourable terms (which was met, it may be observed, by the submission of Meletius himself with his bishops and clergy, but was not accepted by the people who had attached themselves to these leaders, who now persevered in their separation from the dominant Church, and afterwards made common cause with the Arians);—great respect was shown to the Novatians, and easy terms of reconciliation were proposed to them, which however did not induce them to forego their dissent to the reigning system;—and other regulations as to discipline were included in the canons of this council, which amounted in the whole to twenty. With these matters, however, we are not immediately concerned; but there are some features in the history and acts of the Council of Nicæa which directly affect our subject,

and demand, on several accounts, a more careful and minute description.

The Council of Nicæa was convened by Constantine, in virtue of his imperial authority: it was by his will that the assembly was called together, and in his name the summonses were issued; it was he who made arrangements and regulations for the meeting, and it is plain, from the expressions employed by Constantine himself, and from the whole tenor of the observations made by contemporary historians, and others who wrote shortly afterwards,\* that the convocation of this council was universally regarded at the time as simply the act and deed of the emperor. It is surprising to hear some Romish writers maintain that this synod could not have been convened without the consent and concurrence of Silvester, the bishop of Rome;—a statement entirely at variance with the constitution of the Church and its relations to the State in the days of Constantine, and expressly opposed by authentic records. It is true that, more than three hundred and fifty years afterwards (A.D. 680), it was said in the acts of the sixth General Council (at Constantinople) that the bishops were assembled at Nicæa by Constantine and Silvester: but, either this may mean simply that Silvester, as chief bishop of his province, received instructions from Constantine to convey the summonses to the bishops within his jurisdiction; or, if it was intended to imply that the emperor did not act by his sole authority in this respect, then such a testimony is of no weight in opposition to earlier and contemporary assertions in the affirmative. It is generally supposed that Hosius

\* Euseb. De Vit. Constant. 3, 6, 9; Socrat. H. E. 1, 18; Sozom. H. E. 1, 17; Theodoret. H. E. 1, 7.

was president of the council ; but, if so, it is certain that he did not occupy that position in place of the bishop of Rome. Some writers, however, maintain that most probably the bishops of Antioch and Alexandria presided by turns.

At the same time, it is a circumstance highly significant of the influence of the whole hierarchy over the mind of the emperor, that, when he first met the assembly, he remained standing until he received an intimation from the bishops to be seated, and when he had used their permission, they likewise took their seats. On the very same day, however, Constantine publicly committed to the flames a whole heap of petitions which had been eagerly presented to him on his arrival at Nicæa by various bishops who were involved in disputes with each other, all of whom sought the emperor's decision in their favour ; and this summary mode of proceeding was accompanied by an observation from the emperor that Christ commands every one who hopes for forgiveness himself to forgive his brother.\* According to Sozomen, indeed, even this act of Constantine was designed as a token of respect to the bishops, rather than as a mark of rebuke ; and the remark which he made was to the effect that such complaints must be referred to the decision of the last great day, and that it did not become him, as a mortal man, to sit in judgment on causes in which all the parties were priests, who ought so to conduct themselves as not to become amenable to the judgment of other men.† It is extremely probable that the act might have been so performed, and accompanied by such observations, as to admit of a

\* Euseb. De Vit. Constant. 3, 10—12 ; Socrat. H. E. 1, 8.

† Sozom. H. E. 1, 17.

double interpretation. Constantine was not unfrequently present at the deliberations of the councils, employing his best endeavours, by argument and mild representations, to establish peace, and to moderate the vehemence of the contending bishops; and he did not fail to admonish them that they ought to settle their controversies by an appeal to the sacred Scriptures.\*

One of the canons of this council,—the sixth,—is of great importance in our present inquiry; because, while it relates to the ecclesiastical constitution of the times, it clearly demonstrates the absence of any supreme authority in the bishop of Rome, and on this account it has been tampered with in a remarkable manner by certain advocates of Papal claims. We have already seen that certain bishops of large and important dioceses had become chief bishops of whole provinces, their jurisdiction being recognised by the rural bishops, or bishops of small towns, throughout a certain region more or less intimately connected with the principal see; and that in this manner the bishop of Rome was the chief bishop of the greater part of Italy. By the sixth canon of the council of Nicæa this system was now formally recognised and established, and the title of *Metropolitan* was conferred upon those bishops who exercised provincial jurisdiction. The canon runs thus: “The ancient custom in Egypt, Libya, and Pentapolis shall continue to be observed, namely, that the bishop of Alexandria have ecclesiastical jurisdiction over all these districts; as the bishop of Rome, according to usage, exercises such jurisdiction over the churches of certain countries. In like manner also their privileges

\* Euseb. De Vit. Const. 3, 13; Theodoret. H. E. 1—7.

shall be preserved to the Church of Antioch and the Churches in other provinces. In general, it is plain that the great council will not suffer any person to remain a bishop who has become such without the consent of the metropolitan. If, however, an otherwise unanimous election of a bishop, according to the laws of the Church, should be factiously opposed by only two or three, the choice of the majority shall prevail." \* The occasion of this canon was doubtless the Meletian schism in Egypt; but its design was to prevent the probability of such disorders throughout the Church; and it asserts in express terms the equal authority of the three metropolitan (afterwards patriarchal) sees of Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch. Nothing can be more clear than the intention and the terms of this canon. Romish writers, however, not failing to perceive how decidedly and fatally it tells against the assumption of the early supremacy of Rome, have endeavoured to mystify or misrepresent its meaning. According to them, the Nicene fathers meant to enact that the bishop of Alexandria should govern his province with those powers which the bishop of Rome had for a long time past permitted him to exercise, hereby implying the subordination of Alexandria itself to Rome. And in order to bring out this sense as clearly as possible, a passage is interpolated in the old Latin translation of the canons to the effect that the Roman Church always had the primacy. This interpolation is now generally abandoned by the advocates of Rome; but deep must have been the sense of a want of legitimate support to the doctrine of Roman supremacy when originally, and for a long course of years, not only was a distorted

\* Conc. Nic. 1, c. 6.

meaning attached to a plain enactment, but a clause was added with a view to make the canon convey a sense which it was not intended to express. If an interpretation of the canon be needed, it is abundantly supplied by Rufin, a writer of the fourth century, who observes, concerning the jurisdiction of the Roman bishop to which reference is made, that it must have extended to the *ecclesiæ suburbicariæ*, or the *regiones suburbicariæ*, *i. e.*, the churches or provinces bordering on Rome, comprising in fact central and lower Italy. Such was no doubt the extent of jurisdiction which appertained to the bishop of Rome at the beginning of the fourth century, as Metropolitan; although afterwards, as primate or patriarch, he was at the head of nearly all the Churches of the West. The Jesuit Sirmond has indeed contended that Rufin himself meant to ascribe all the western Churches to the Roman jurisdiction, but other writers have abundantly displayed the utter untenableness of his position.\*

The canons of this council were confirmed by Constantine, and hereby acquired the force of imperial law: the emperor addressed an epistle to the Church of Alexandria recommending their universal observance;† and they were soon afterwards formally adopted by various provincial councils in different parts of the empire; the several branches of the Church thus retaining a shadow of their ancient independence, in giving their sanction to what, if they had been so inclined, they could not have ventured to reject. It is evident, from the whole history of this council, that at this time the emperor and no other was in all

\* See Launoï, *De rectâ Can. 6 Nic. Intelligentiâ*.

† Socrates, *H. E.* 1, 9.

causes and over all persons ecclesiastical, within his dominions, supreme.

During the greater part of the reign of Constantine the bishop of Rome was Silvester, who held that office for about the space of twenty-two years. Of his personal character and acts we know but little. He was succeeded in the year 336 by Mark, who died a few months after his election, and made way for Julius,

A. D. 336.  
Mark.

A. D. 337.  
Julius.

**A. D. 337.** Under the sons of Constantine religious controversy raged with great fury in the East, uncontrolled by those abilities and that love of moderation and peace which had distinguished the late emperor. At the same time the suppression of paganism was carried with a high hand throughout the empire; the heathen temples were closed or, more frequently, destroyed; sacrifices to the gods were forbidden under penalty of death; and it is probable that in some places the adherents of the ancient superstition suffered violence in accordance with the newly-made laws of the Christian empire. The clergy continued to be the objects of imperial favour, especially in the confirmation and extension of civil immunities; and it was enacted by Constantius that bishops should be exempt from the jurisdiction of the civil courts, being amenable only to the judgment of other bishops, that is to say, of the provincial councils.\*

The Arians having obtained favour at the court of Constantius, Athanasius found himself compelled to use great efforts for the maintenance of his position, in defence of the doctrines established at Nicæa. He assembled a council of about one hundred Egyptian bishops, which defended him against the charges

A. D. 340.

\* Cod. Theod. l. 16, t. 2; De Episc. Eccles. et Cleric. l. 12.



urged against him by the Eusebian party, and retorted on them by accusations of various acts of injustice and oppression. Hereupon the Eusebians had recourse in self-defence to other bishops, and especially to Julius, bishop of Rome, entreating him to convene a council for the consideration of the matter in debate, and proposing that he should act as judge or umpire. Julius consented, and Athanasius, after having answered the accusations of the Eusebians by deputies, complied with the request of Julius to appear in person before him. Thus did the quarrels of foreign Churches contribute, from time to time, to the undue elevation of the Roman see.

The influence of the bishop of Rome must have been greatly augmented by the presence of Athanasius, the head of an extensive and renowned metropolitan see, who came to confront his accusers in a council over which the bishop of Rome presided, and to await the decision of that tribunal. The bishop of Constantinople and others were at the same time attracted from the East, with a view to urge their own complaints against the Eusebian party, and to obtain a decision in their favour. The verdict was in favour of Athanasius and his friends;\* and Julius wrote a letter to his "dear brethren," the bishops of the Eusebian party, declaring the judgment of the Italian bishops in council assembled, and entreating them to repair the breach of unity which had been occasioned by the deposition of unoffending bishops. Such, at least, is the account of the epistle of Julius, as given by Athanasius himself; but, according to Socrates and Sozomen,† it was conceived in a sharper tone, ex-

\* Athanas. Apol. contr. Arian. p. 141.

† Socrates, H. E. 2, 15; Sozomen, H. E. 3, 8.

tending even to the language of severe reproof and threatening. It is to be observed, however, that their report of the matter rests upon inferior and uncertain authority.

Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra, having been condemned as a heretic, and placed on a par with Sabelius and Paul of Samosata by the Eusebians in the Council of Antioch, A.D. 341, appealed to Julius, bishop of Rome, and requested him to convene a council for the trial of his cause. The council was convened accordingly; the accusers of Marcellus, who had been invited to confront him, did not appear, and the bishop was pronounced orthodox.

A. D. 341. Athanasius was afterwards obliged to repair to Rome for his personal safety, in consequence of the disturbance which took place at Alexandria, when, under the sanction of Constantius, Gregory was put in possession of the see.

Council of Sardica.  
A. D. 347. Not long afterwards, Constans and Constantius convened a general council at Sardica (now Sophia or Triadizza), in Lower Mœsia (Bulgaria), with a view to prevent, if possible, the schism which appeared to be imminent from the differences between Oriental and Western bishops in the cause of Athanasius,—the latter taking an active part against the prevalent Eusebian party in the East. On this occasion about three hundred bishops assembled, almost exclusively from the Western Churches, including some from Britain. The Eusebians who were present protested against the permission given to Athanasius, and others whom they had excommunicated, to have seats in the council; but the Western bishops insisted upon their presence being allowed, inasmuch as they had never been separated from their communion, and the council at

Rome had already decided in their favour. Hereupon the Eusebian bishops, except two, left the council, and refused to take part in the proceedings: they retired to Philippopolis, in Thrace, where they assembled under the presidency of Stephen, bishop of Antioch, and, claiming to be the real Council of Sardica, addressed a letter to all Christian Churches, repelling the charge of Arianism, and containing a confession of faith resembling the orthodox, with the omission of the word *homoousios*,—requiring them not to hold communion with Athanasius and his friends, including Julius and Hosius. The remainder of the bishops then commenced their deliberations, under the presidency of Hosius, bishop of Corduba. It is most probable that Hosius was elected to fill this post on account of his personal character, and his well-known zeal in favour of the Nicene doctrines; and certainly it is a mere modern pretence that he presided as the legate of the bishop of Rome. Three Italian bishops, as the real deputies from Rome, subscribed their names to the decrees of the council after that of Hosius. By this council the Nicene confession of faith was ratified; Athanasius was again acquitted; and sentence of deposition and excommunication was passed against the Eusebian bishops, as favouring Arian error, and guilty of various acts of violence and oppression. Several enactments were made concerning ecclesiastical discipline, some of which strongly indicate the prevalence of jealousy among the bishops, and the worldly ambition with which too many of them were infected.

Most important, however, to our present purpose, and of great significancy, at once as to the temper of the times, and as to the real extent of jurisdiction at

that time possessed by the bishop of Rome, is the attempt which was made by this Council of Sardica\* to establish a system of appeals to Rome from all parts of Christendom. It was enacted that, when any bishop against whom sentence might have been pronounced in a provincial synod should demand a further investigation of his cause, the bishops of his own or of a neighbouring province should communicate his desire to the Roman bishop (Julius, added in the Greek), out of respect to the memory of the apostle Peter. If the bishop of Rome should see fit to grant the request, then it was for him to nominate judges, who should give the case a further hearing; otherwise the sentence already passed should be valid. It was also provided that, whenever a bishop who might have been deposed by the other bishops of his province should make an appeal to Rome, his office should not be filled up by the appointment of a successor until the decision of that tribunal should be known; and it was left at the option of the bishop of Rome either to send his own presbyters, or to appoint bishops of the province, to determine such causes.

It is evident that regulations such as these were adapted to make a decisive change in the administration of Church government, and even to lead to the establishment of Papal supremacy within the Church. Hitherto the bishops had governed the Church by joint authority, and had settled their own differences when assembled in council; but by this system of appeal they were manifestly paving the way of submission to one common head. These canons, it is true, did not take effect; even candid Roman Ca-

\* Conc. Sardic., c. 3, 4.

tholic writers admit that they were of no weight, and were never binding ; and the ancient constitution of the Church remained unaltered, in this respect, for a long time after the meeting of the Council of Sardica. In consequence of the retirement of the Oriental bishops, the assembly at Sardica was not a general council ; and, what is still more decisive, its canons never received the ratification of the emperor. Nor were the bishops of the Eastern Churches at all disposed to submit to the establishment of such a system of appeal to Rome. And the novelty of the proposed system appears not only from all preceding history, but from the very assignment of a reason (the honour of St. Peter) which the canon itself embodies. Still there remains for our observation the fact that the Western bishops were, for their part, almost, if not quite, ready to submit to the supremacy of Rome. It has been thought likely that this provision of appeal was designed as a temporary expedient, to remain in force only during the episcopate of Julius, who is expressly named in the Greek canon : but, even in this case, the surrender was important, as establishing a dangerous precedent ; and it must have been foreseen that such a subordination, once introduced and sanctioned, would soon become permanent, especially as the pretended reason upon which it was founded would be equally cogent in all future ages. The truth seems to be that the bishops at Sardica were willing and prepared to sacrifice their independence, both present and future, for the sake of carrying their point against the Asiatic Eusebians, or favourers of Arian tenets. They knew that they had the bishop of Rome on their side in support of Athanasius ; and, with a view to insure his success in all future trials,

or, rather, to put all accusations against him out of question for the time to come, they desired to invest his friend and supporter with the character of universal umpire or judge. Short-sighted policy indeed was this, but a striking instance of the manner in which power was from time to time given into the hands of Rome by the selfish passions and designs of contending parties in the Church. Combatants, manœuvring against each other, and intent upon gaining a present victory, continually made way for the usurpation and tyranny of a common master. The council wrote to Julius, reporting their proceedings, and requesting him to publish their decrees in Sicily, Sardinia, and Italy. A passage now to be found in this epistle,—to the effect that it is very becoming that the priests of all provinces should refer their causes to the head, that is, to the seat of the apostle Peter,—is manifestly spurious.

Athanasius was restored to his bishopric in 346; but after the death of Constans, who had been one of his efficient supporters, his enemies began again to use their influence for his overthrow. The old complaints were once more carried to Julius; after whose death, in 352, his successor Liberius summoned the bishop of Alexandria to Rome to answer for himself before a council. Athanasius, on this occasion, refused to obey the summons; whereupon Liberius renounced communion with him, and proceeded to form a more intimate alliance with the Oriental (Semiarian) bishops. A large number of Egyptian bishops, however, sent to the bishop of Rome so strong a representation in favour of Athanasius, that Liberius was led to entertain a more favourable opinion concerning him. Constantius, on the other hand, was soon induced

A. D. 352.  
Liberius.

to take active measures against him ; and Athanasius was condemned, first by a council held at Arles in the year 353, and again by another council at Milan two years afterwards, at both which councils the influence of the emperor was so completely paramount that when the two presbyters who represented the bishop of Rome at the last-named council, in common with some other members of that assembly, refused to concur in the condemnation of Athanasius, they were sent into banishment by the emperor's command,—a fate which was afterwards shared by other Western bishops on the same account. From this time, Constantius manifested decided and persevering opposition to the friends of Athanasius and of the Nicene Confession ; and proceeded even to the commission of acts of great violence and oppression towards those bishops and other persons who refused to lend their support to the Arians. The emperor now made a great effort to gain over Liberius to his views ; but the Roman bishop continued to offer a firm resistance to his wishes, and at last, on account of his contumacy, he was banished to Thrace.\* Athanasius was again driven from his Church, and sought safety in concealment among the Egyptian monks and hermits ; many other orthodox bishops were ejected, and some driven into banishment ; and the Arian party, aided by the stringent measures of Constantius, was completely in the ascendant. Even at Rome, an Arian bishop, in the person of Felix, was appointed as successor to Liberius, although not without some opposition on the part of the people.†

A. D. 355,  
Felix.

\* Theodoret. H. E. 2, 15, 16 ; Sozom. H. E. 4, c. 11. Conf. Ammian. Marcellin. 15, 7.

† Sozom. H. E. 4, 15.

Council of  
Sirmium.  
A. D. 357.

In the year 357 a council was held at Sirmium under the influence of Constantius, at which a new confession of faith (Semiarian or rather Arian) was agreed upon. To this confession Hosius, the aged bishop of Corduba, and formerly the strenuous supporter of Athanasius, gave his consent; and soon afterwards the banished Liberius, finding himself in danger of his life, and desirous of being reinstated in his bishopric, yielded to the force of circumstances, subscribed the confession of Sirmium, and renounced communion with Athanasius. He wrote to the oriental bishops, assuring them that his former support of Athanasius arose from respect to the memory of his predecessor Julius, and declaring that, as soon as it pleased God to let him see how justly they had condemned him, he ranged himself on their side, and was determined henceforth to hold no communion with Athanasius. He said that he fully assented to the Catholic confession of Sirmium, and he entreated their holinesses, on account of this agreement with them in the faith, to assist him in the recovery of his bishopric. With equally urgent representations he engaged the efforts of other bishops in his cause; and, amidst his strong professions of attachment to the Arian cause, he succeeded in regaining his position as bishop of Rome.\*

But this prosperity served to foster the seeds of dissension which had already existed in the Arian body, composed as it was of men of different shades of sentiment, who agreed only in their opposition to the Nicene confession of faith. No sooner was

\* But some say that Liberius did not subscribe the creed of Sirmium. On the whole, the accounts respecting him are very conflicting and uncertain.



this common object of animosity practically done away, than they began to discuss their own differences in the spirit of the age; and these internal distractions made way for the entire overthrow of their party.\* Towards the latter part of his life, Constantius favoured the strict Arians, rather than the Semiarrians whose cause he at first espoused. He died in the year 361.

The brief reign of Julian, who zealously employed his influence for the promotion of heathen superstition and for the suppression of Christianity, must have operated as a check to the rivalry of conflicting parties. Indeed, it ought to have led back the whole Church, affected by an overwhelming sense of shame and duty, under the visible displeasure of heaven, to something like primitive simplicity of faith and worship; and it might at least have tended to unite men of different opinions in the bonds of holy unity and concord. Christians at this time might have learned wisdom at once from the withdrawal of courtly favour, and from the well-merited reproaches of their enemies. But this change in the aspect of their affairs was of too short duration, and the measures of Julian, so far as he was able to pursue them, were of too lenient a character to produce any permanent effect upon the form of Church government, or upon the progress of ecclesiastical power. Had Julian lived to pursue, through a long series of years, the policy which he began to adopt with regard to the Christian religion, it would seem as though the result would have been a great purification of the Church, without any real hindrance to the Gospel. Had he returned from his Persian campaign to carry out a

A. D.  
361-363.  
Julian, emp.

\* Socrates, H. E. 1, 6.

system of more violent persecution—which some supposed to be his design—in that case there would have been either a renewal of the earlier position of the Church as in the times of Decius or Diocletian, or probably a civil commotion in which the emperor would have found himself defeated. As it was, the external prosperity of the Church was fully restored immediately after Julian's removal; court favour was again extended to the bishops and clergy; large numbers of the heathen were nominally at least converted to the Christian faith; the Church possessed not a few learned and eloquent advocates and teachers, many of whose works have come down to the present day; and, in a word, the profession of Christianity was popular and flourishing. But the evils which formerly existed had not found a cure; the bitterness of theological controversy was not only renewed, but now began to ripen into a spirit of intolerance and persecution; much vain philosophy and artificial trifling was mixed up with the exposition of Christian doctrine and the defence of Christian principles, by even the best and most pious writers of the day; superstition was rapidly gaining ground; and the power of the bishops became more than ever exclusive, and dangerous to the peace of the Church and to the interests of true religion. In a word, the elements of spiritual despotism were now fearfully at work, and their effects were becoming visible. So completely does the great Head of the Church adhere to that wise and merciful principle of government by which he gives full permission to the tares to grow up together with the wheat.

A. D. 363.

After the death of Liberius, the election of a bishop as his successor was eagerly contested, amidst

scenes of confusion and bloodshed. The competitors were Damasus, a presbyter, and Ursicinus (or Ursinus) a deacon. It is difficult to determine which of these was first in the field, or which of the contending parties was most to blame for the disorders that ensued; but it is agreed on all hands that each was elected bishop by his own partisans among the clergy and laity, and that eventually Damasus and his party prevailed. After some deadly conflicts between the followers of the two rivals, Ursicinus was banished from the city; and a similar sentence was about to be carried into effect against seven presbyters of his party, when the people interfered, and lodged them for safety in one of the churches.\* But even here they found no shelter from the fury of their opponents. Armed with fire and sword, Damasus, with some of his adherents both of the clergy and of the laity, proceeded to the place of refuge, and left no less than a hundred and sixty of their adversaries dead within the sacred precincts. The victory was thus decided in favour of Damasus; but it was long before the parties who had thus been arrayed against each other forgot their differences and peace was completely restored. Ursicinus was recalled from exile by Valentinian in 367; but his presence excited fresh commotions, and he was finally banished, with seven of his partisans, to Gaul. His friends retained possession of one of the churches for some time, from which they were at length violently expelled by Damasus.

“Make me bishop of Rome,” said Prætextatus, the prefect of the city at this time, “and I will im-

\* Ammian. Marcellin. lib. 27, c. 3, §§ 12, 13. Conf. Baron. Ann. a. 368, n. 2, 19.

mediately become a Christian!" And very remarkable is the language of Ammianus Marcellinus, a contemporary historian, as showing what was the impression made upon the minds of intelligent observers among the heathen, by the pomp and luxury of the Roman bishops of this date. "I cannot deny," says he, speaking of the contentions between Damasus and Ursicinus, "when I consider the splendour of Rome, that the aspirants to this bishopric had good reason to arouse all the energy of their partisans in order to obtain their object. When once they have secured this post their fortune is made; they ride in carriages, are gorgeously apparelled, and in the profuse luxury of their tables they surpass the banquets of royalty itself. Happy would they be if, regardless of the greatness of the city, which they plead in excuse of their excesses, they would imitate the manners of some of the provincial bishops, who, by their moderation and temperance, their modest appearance and their humble deportment, commend themselves as good and holy men in the sight of God and his true worshippers!"\* Jerome paints the avarice and luxury of the Roman clergy of this period in equally unfavourable colours.†

A. D. 366.  
Damasus.

No sooner was Damasus settled in his bishopric than he obtained an important confirmation of his authority by an edict of Valentinian and Gratian, enacting that the bishop of Rome should hear and determine disputes between other bishops, in order that religious matters might not be decided by the civil magistrate, but only by the high-priest of religion and his associates. This law was probably designed

\* Ammian. Marcellin. lib. 27, c. 3, § 14.

† Hieron. Ep. 2, ad Nepotian.

to be of force only within the existing limits of the jurisdiction of the Roman bishop; but a council which met at Rome (A.D. 380), in consequence of troubles occasioned by the party of Ursicinus, laboured not without success for the extension of this jurisdiction itself, inducing the emperor to make it lawful for the bishop of Rome to hear appeals from the bishops of other provinces against the judgment of their own metropolitans, and even to sit in judgment on metropolitans themselves. It is manifest that these laws involved a considerable transfer of power from the hands of the civil magistrate to the ecclesiastical ruler of Rome.

Some\* say that Damasus made a successful advance towards universal dominion by the appointment of the bishop of Thessalonica as his vicar, to govern the Churches of Illyricum and the neighbouring countries as dependent on the see of Rome; but it appears, on the whole, that this matter is antedated, and that it was not until the following century that the bishop of Thessalonica yielded to the Roman jurisdiction in the administration of ecclesiastical affairs within his metropolitan province.—An epistle is extant which Damasus wrote, in the name of a council held at Rome, to the Illyrian bishops, against the Arians.†

In the time of Damasus, the oriental bishops were anxiously looking to Rome for assistance in restoring to their Churches that unity which was still sadly distracted by the Arian controversies, and by the Meletian schism at Antioch. Basil, bishop of Cæsarea in Palestine, wrote to Damasus, and at the same time

\* Pagi; Tillemont; followed by Bower.

† Theodoret. H. E. 2, 22; see also 5, 10, 11.

the Eastern bishops, as a body, addressed an epistle to the Western, entreating that deputies should be sent from the West to assist in bringing about the desired accommodation. The Western bishops replied by an assurance of their consent in the faith with their orthodox brethren in the East.\* Damasus treated the matter slightly, and manifested considerable want of information as to the state of matters in the East; which led to heavy complaints on the part of Basil † concerning that pride and ignorance of ecclesiastical affairs by which “the Western bishops and their head” had been continually creating confusion in the Church. When Damasus at length interposed, instead of acting as mediator between the contending parties, he assumed the office of a judge, and, contrary to the sense of the whole Eastern Church, he declared Meletius a heretic and unfit to retain his bishopric. Basil was by this still more enraged: ‡ and, writing to another bishop, he said, “I could not help thinking of the saying of Diomedes, that ‘we must ask nothing of Achilles, for he is too proud.’ The more one asks of a proud and vain man, the prouder and more distant he becomes.” In fact, the assumed decision of Damasus can be excused only on the ground of ignorance.

Baronius § affirms that the General Council of Constantinople, held in the year 381, was convened by Damasus; but later writers, even some of the Romish communion, admit that it was convened by the emperor Theodosius, who alone had authority to do so. Neither can it be maintained || that, without the ratification of the Roman bishop, the decrees of that

\* Basil. M. Ep. 273, 324

† Ibid. 8, 250.

‡ Ibid. 10.

§ Baron. An. 381, n. 20.

|| With Pagi, Breviar.

council would not have been valid in the West ; since, assuredly, the same authority which could convene a council was sufficient to confirm its acts. The Oriental bishops, it is true, in the course of the following year, sent an account of their decrees to the Western bishops assembled in council at Rome, and requested their co-operation in carrying these decrees into effect ;\* but this does not imply any such authority as has been claimed for the Roman bishop with reference to the Council of Constantinople.

Damasus died in 384. He has been numbered among the saints of the Romish Church ; and is regarded in the martyrology as a confessor, probably on account of the resistance which he encountered at his entrance on his office. The excessive praises which have been lavished upon him by some writers, in accordance with two ancient, but manifestly fabulous, lives of this bishop which have been prefixed to his works, and the grave charges which have been brought against him by others, are perhaps equally without foundation.

After the death of Damasus the party of Ursinus endeavoured in vain to procure his succession to the see ; the emperor, Valentinian II., confirmed the election of Siricius. An epistle of this bishop is remarkable at once as constituting the oldest genuine portion of the canon law, and as containing a specimen of the increasingly haughty pretensions of the Romish see. Himerius, bishop of Tarragona in Spain, had written to Damasus, requesting his own opinion and that of the Roman clergy upon certain points of Church discipline. Siricius read this letter to his clergy ; and sent back an answer in which he pre-

A. D. 384.  
Siricius.

\* Theodoret, II. E. 5, 9.

scribed various regulations of discipline in a right dictatorial style. In particular, he strongly condemned the conduct of those among the clergy who had continued to live with their wives whom they had married before their ordination, and who had justified their practice by the example of priests and Levites under the old dispensation; and he ordered all who should claim such right on these grounds to be deposed from their offices in the Church by authority of the apostolic see. He also laid down a rule that, henceforth, in Spain, the baptism of adults should take place only at Easter and Whitsuntide; adding a threat that any of the clergy who should refuse to comply with this regulation should "be torn off from that firm apostolical rock on which Christ had built his Church." And he distinctly affirmed that Rome was "the head" of the Church in Spain.

Other events of the episcopate of Siricius may be thus summed up in the words of a modern writer. "The power of the Church of Rome over the Catholic Church was still further extended by this bishop, by a decree which he procured from a council summoned at Rome, which ordained that none should presume to consecrate a bishop without the knowledge and consent of the apostolic see. Many, indeed, believe this decree to be spurious. Whether it be so or not, it is of very early date; and must have been forged in the name of Siricius soon after this period. The question is discussed in the notes to Bower.—A yet further exercise of the incipient papal power characterised the present period. Jovinian, the learned and exemplary friend of Jerome, having embraced certain opinions respecting the mother of Christ which Jerome condemned, Siricius summoned



a council at Rome to condemn them also. When they did so, he excommunicated him and his friends. Jovinian appealed to Ambrose at Milan. The papal mandate followed him to that city, and procured his expulsion. The emperor Honorius condemned Jovinian and his coadjutors to be punished with whips armed with lead. So early did the cruelties of the ecclesiastical power, calling on the civil power, begin to torment the most spiritual and eminent Christians.

“The independence, however, of the several Churches was not yet destroyed. On the occasion of the election of Evagrius as the successor of Paulinus in the see of Antioch, several bishops, and among them the bishop of Rome, adhered to his communion. Others, however, adhered to the cause of his competitor Flavianus. Both candidates were required by the emperor Theodosius to submit their cause, not to the bishop of Rome, but to a council at Capua, who referred the same to the bishops of Egypt. Flavianus refused to submit to this decision. Siricius wrote to Theodosius to beg him to send Flavianus to Rome. The emperor complied. Flavianus immediately offered to resign the see of Antioch, rather than submit to Siricius. He would not acknowledge the right of the bishop of Rome to judge him. The emperor continued him in the see of Antioch; and, seventeen years after, he was reconciled to the bishop of Rome, without any act of submission, by the interference of the celebrated Chrysostom. So slowly did the Church of Rome progress in its dominion over the Catholic Church; and so universal was the opposition, as Du Plessis has showed, to every step of that progress. Flavianus requested communion to be restored between himself

and Siricius, after the death of Evagrius, without any compromise, submission, or servility.—Another proof was afforded of the same slowness of the progress to the domination of the Roman over the Catholic Church. Bonosus, the bishop of Naissus, was accused of heresy and violation of the canons. The cause was committed to the neighbouring bishops. He was condemned. He appealed, not to Rome, but to Ambrose at Milan. Ambrose recommended submission to the sentence. The bishops who had condemned him wrote to Siricius requesting him to approve of their decision. Siricius, however, informed them, in reply, that he was not empowered to judge the cause; for the province over which Bonosus had been appointed, together with them, had been committed to their charge by the Council of Capua. He thus acknowledged, great as his desire seems to have been to extend the influence of his see, the superiority of a council to himself; and disclaimed that universal power over the Catholic Church which his successors so unscrupulously affirm. Siricius enlarged, however, the basis of the papal power, and prepared the way, by his edict to the Western bishops, for eventual supremacy over the independent episcopal Churches which constituted, in their aggregate, the Catholic Church of Christ.”\*

A. D. 398.  
Anastasius  
I.

Siricius was succeeded, in 398, by Anastasius I., who ruled during the space of only four years. The part which he took in the Origenist controversy between Jerome and Rufin reflects little credit on his character as a theologian, and may well fill us with astonishment at that state of things in the Romish Church which could consist with the election of such a person

\* Townsend, Ecclesiastical and Civil History, book 2, chap. 9.

to the high office of its bishop. Rufin had translated into Latin one of the principal works of Origen, against some of whose opinions Jerome was arrayed in bitter opposition ; and hereupon Jerome and his friends prevailed upon Anastasius to excommunicate Rufin, and to pass a sentence of condemnation upon the doctrines of Origen ; while Anastasius at the same time confessed, not only that he knew nothing of the translation of Rufin, but that he had never heard who Origen was, or what he had written. Yet this bishop received extravagant commendations from Jerome, whose cause he espoused. It is worthy of remark that the bishop of Aquileia continued to communicate with Rufin, notwithstanding his excommunication by Anastasius ; and we find also that, at this time, the bishops of Africa, in the exercise of their independent rights, refused to submit to a decision made by the bishop of Rome in the case of the Donatists.

Anastasius was followed by Innocent I., who held the see for fifteen years, and displayed unexampled boldness in pushing forward the claims of the Roman see, and in demanding universal submission to his assumed authority.

A. D. 402.  
Innocent I.

It appears that (if the Epistles be genuine) many bishops wrote to Innocent, requesting a report of certain particulars of discipline as practised in the Roman Church, for their own guidance ; in reply to which, he repeated and even extended the injunctions of his predecessor Siricius concerning clerical abstinence from connubial intercourse,—declared it to be incumbent on all the Western Churches to conform to the pattern of that of Rome, or, which amounts to the same thing, to the precepts of the apostle Peter,—and said that disputes among the clergy should be

decided in a provincial council, but that the principal cases must be laid before the apostolic see.

Chrysostom, being out of favour with the court of Constantinople, and persecuted by the Oriental bishops, applied to the bishops of Rome, Milan, and Aquileia, as the three principal bishops of the West, beseeching them still to retain communion with him, and to lend him their support against the unjust proceedings of his opponents. In his Epistle he ascribed especial honour to the bishop of Rome: but there is nothing whatever in this document, or in any contemporary record, to justify the assertion of Baronius and Pagi that Chrysostom *appealed* to the decision of Innocent, and that we herein find a proof that the canons of the Council of Sardica concerning appeals to Rome were in force with regard to the Eastern Churches no less than in the West. Chrysostom appealed to a lawfully-constituted council; and Innocent desired that such a council, consisting both of Eastern and Western bishops, should be convened for the decision of his case. He disapproved of the proceedings of the Eastern bishops, but declared that he maintained communion with both parties. This is altogether different from giving a final decision on the case; a pretence which has been abundantly refuted by Launoi.\* Even Pagi refutes an opinion expressed by Baronius that Innocent excommunicated the emperor Arcadius and the empress Eudoxia on account of their unjust proceedings against Chrysostom.

A. D. 410.

It was during the episcopate of Innocent that Rome was sacked and plundered by Alaric. Innocent was absent at the time of the consummation of this calamity, having gone to Ravenna, with others,

\* Launoi, De Antiquâ Ecclesiæ Disciplinâ, Diss. 2.

on a fruitless embassy to Honorius, with a view to persuade him to accept the conditions of peace proposed by Alaric.

In 412, Innocent nominated Rufus, bishop of Thessalonica, as his vicar in Eastern Illyricum. No appointment of this kind, so definite and express, had hitherto taken place in any communications which had been made by the bishops of Rome to those of Thessalonica: and therefore, strictly speaking, we may date the first appointment of Roman vicars in Illyricum from this time. Innocent declared that, by favour of the apostolic see, the bishop of Thessalonica was permitted to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction in his province,—to hear causes, together with such bishops as he might choose for his assessors,—and to pronounce judgment in the name of the bishop of Rome.

To certain Macedonian bishops who wrote to him A. D. 414. concerning points of discipline, Innocent returned a haughty reply, in which he expressed his astonishment that they should again consult the apostolic chair, the head of the Church, on points which it had already determined.

Writing to Decentius, bishop of Eugubium (now A. D. 416. Gubio, in the Papal States), Innocent represented it as a duty incumbent upon all Western Churches to conform to the customs and institutions of the Church of Rome, because, as he falsely assumed, all Churches in Italy, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Sicily, and the neighbouring islands, were founded by those, and those alone, who had been made priests by Peter, the chief of the apostles, or by his successors in the see of Rome.—“In his answer, towards the end of his episcopate, to the bishops of the Council of Carthage,

Innocent affirms that all ecclesiastical matters throughout the world are, by Divine right, to be referred to the apostolic see before they are finally decided in the provinces. This bold and novel claim was instantly rejected, though in respectful language, by the African bishops. They had condemned Pelagius and Cælestius without consulting Innocent. They wrote to him, according to the custom then prevalent among all bishops, to inform him of their decision, and to require his sanction of their conduct. Innocent asserts the supremacy of his see. They reply by denying that supremacy, and declare their wish to be, that he should act with them by confirming their decision by his authority, as he ought to do. Innocent, in his reply, evades the question whether they ought to have consulted him before they condemned Pelagius, by affirming that they had done well by observing the ordinances of the Fathers in referring for a final conclusion to the apostolic see; and he then excommunicated Pelagius as the African bishops had done. In this conduct he sets the example, too, of the subtle manner in which Rome, when resisted, compromises disputes without withdrawing its pretensions, or offending, unless it can do so with impunity. One of the principal novelties in the letters of this bishop is found in that to Alexander, bishop of Antioch. He affirms that the Synod of Nicæa honoured Antioch, not for the greatness of the see, but because St. Peter had his see first in that city. Another novelty introduced by Innocent was the foundation of much of the subsequent presumptions of the bishop of Rome. He decided, in his letter to the same bishop, that when a province is divided by the emperor, there shall still be one metropolitan, and that the

Church be not altered at the discretion of the emperors. This seems to have been the first edict of a Christian bishop which ventured to declare the decisions of an ecclesiastic to be independent of the will of a prince. The decree of Innocent was an usurpation upon the united authority, both of the general or provincial synods, which were accustomed so frequently to meet, and on the authority also of the emperors, by whom alone they had been hitherto summoned. A most singular remark occurs also in one of the decrees or letters of this bishop; he declares that the priests who have departed from the Catholic faith have lost the Holy Spirit, which operates chiefly in ordination. The theory seems now to have begun to prevail which makes ordination by a bishop the sole channel of a peculiar grace. In a letter to the bishops and deacons of Macedonia he calls the apostolical see the head of the Churches. This language was the beginning of the assumption which has ended in declaring Rome to be the mother and mistress of all Churches, and out of which there is no salvation. The affirmations of these earlier bishops of Rome, in the course of a few centuries, became each in its turn an antiquity from which precedents were drawn to justify every claim to power over the authority and independence of Churches, over the rights of princes, or over the consciences of individuals. Innocent also enforces, by numerous decrees, the celibacy of the clergy, and condemns, under the penalty of not being admitted to repentance, the woman who vows virginity, and afterwards marries. In this, and in many other enactments, the germ of the future power of the bishops of Rome is discoverable. It is the tendency of all power to enlarge itself as much as

possible. The usurpations of Rome were slow, cautious, gradual, and, in many instances, useful progressions of active, sometimes pious, sometimes crafty, but always ambitious, authority, unsuccessfully resisted by its contemporaries, till it wielded the sceptre over reason, civilization, and Scripture. But to none of its earlier bishops is the see of Rome more deeply indebted for its eventual greatness and dominion than to Innocent I. The very pagans, who sought in the invasion of Alaric to propitiate their ancient deities, solicited his sanction to their proceedings. He was honoured by the emperor, esteemed by his contemporaries, beloved by the people who had unanimously chosen him to be their bishop; and he employed all his great influence to the establishment of the supremacy of Rome, which he appears to have considered essential to the honour of Christianity and the general benefit of the Churches.”\*

A. D. 417.  
Zosimus.

Zosimus, a Greek by birth, was elected bishop of Rome A.D. 417. He trod in the footsteps of Innocent; but he met with greater opposition, and his errors sufficed to teach him that even a Roman bishop could not commit them with impunity. The Pelagian controversy was now rife, and gave him much occupation. Pelagius and his disciple Cælestius had been condemned, not only by the African councils, but also by Innocent, on the ground of the unscriptural nature of their peculiar tenets. Both complained that wrong had been done to them in this respect; they appealed to the sentence of the bishop of Rome; and Cælestius even repaired to Rome in order to obtain a favourable verdict. Parties who made such appeals to Rome from regularly constituted

\* Townsend, Eccles. and Civ. Hist. book 2, chap. 9.



councils in foreign countries could always calculate upon a favourable reception : and Cælestius was not disappointed. Zosimus, having heard the defence of Cælestius, pronounced him free from the charge of heresy ; and in an epistle addressed to Aurelius, bishop of Carthage, and the other African bishops,\* after having spoken of the respect due to the apostolic see in honour of St. Peter, he informed them of the decision at which he had arrived in the case of Cælestius, and upbraided them with their precipitancy in having passed upon him a sentence of condemnation ; demanding at the same time that if any parties desired to convict Cælestius of heresy, they should repair to Rome within the space of two months, and confront him there, since otherwise his innocence would be more than ever regarded as completely established.

Not long after this, Zosimus, having received a communication from Pelagius, with a confession of his faith, pronounced in favour of his orthodoxy, not without making fresh complaint to the African bishops of the haste with which they had listened to his accusers, and expressing his desire that they should cease to regard him with suspicion.†

The African bishops, however, adhered to their decision against both Pelagius and Cælestius, and defended themselves in an epistle addressed to Zosimus, at the same time loudly complaining of his conduct in having presumed to enter upon a fresh examination of a matter which they had already decided. Two more councils were held at Carthage (A.D. 417, 418) in support of the previous sentence. From the first of these, which was but a small

\* Baron. An. 417, n. 19, 49.

† Ibid. n. 25, 19.

assembly, emanated an epistle addressed to Zosimus, entreating him not rashly to intermeddle any further in this matter. The second, which consisted of above two hundred bishops, repeated the sentence of condemnation against Pelagius and Cælestius, and sent its decrees to Zosimus, with a declaration of the intentions of the African bishops not to depart from the judgment which had been passed by his predecessor Innocent concerning these heretics, unless they should conform to the doctrine of the orthodox Church. Innocent had confirmed their sentence; that is, he had declared it to be valid within the limits of his own jurisdiction.

Nor would the African bishops suffer the deacon Paulinus, the first accuser of Cælestius, to repair to Rome in obedience to the summons of Zosimus, on the ground that the question had already been decided by themselves.

Under these circumstances, Zosimus found it expedient to yield.\* In his reply to the African bishops, he told them that, according to the canons and to prescriptive right, the judgment of the Roman see is indisputable;—that the apostle Peter received from Christ power to loose that which was bound, and to bind that which was loosed;—that this power had descended to his successors in the Roman see, who, by human and divine laws, had the care of all the Churches; but that, as to the present matter, he had done nothing without transmitting an account of it to them,—a measure perfectly voluntary on his part, and such as he was by no means bound to adopt, but which he had in this case adopted in order that the affair

\* Baron. An. 418, n. 5, 6; Zosimus, Ep. ad Concilium Carthagiens. Ep. 10 (Labbe).

might be settled by common consent. He then assured the bishops that he had been by no means precipitate in his measures concerning Cælestius; that his last decision was not final; and that, after the receipt of their epistle, he had suffered the matter to remain as it was. In the mean time, the African bishops laid their case before the emperor Honorius, and speedily obtained from him an edict against Pelagius and his followers. Zosimus now summoned Cælestius to appear again before him, and unequivocally to condemn the errors which were ascribed to him; Cælestius, however, declined to appear, and retired from Rome; whereupon Zosimus confirmed the decrees of the African councils, and pronounced sentence of anathema and excommunication against Cælestius and Pelagius. This sentence he reported to all the bishops of the empire in a circular, which he required them to subscribe, in token of their assent. Nineteen bishops of the Western Churches refused to do this, and took part with Pelagius and Cælestius, as orthodox teachers, who had been unjustly condemned,—appealing in their favour to the decision of a general council. Zosimus then convened a council at Rome, which declared all those bishops heretics; and the orthodox had sufficient influence at the imperial court to obtain against them a sentence of deposition.

Zosimus was no less bold, but equally unsuccessful also, in his interference in the affairs of the Gallican Church. A dispute had arisen between the bishops of Arles and Vienne, as to the possession of metropolitan dignity and rights. A council which had been held on this subject at Turin\* had decreed that this honour should be considered to belong to whichever

\* Cir. A. D. 401.

of the two could prove his city to be the civil metropolis, but that, in the mean time, for the sake of peace, each should exercise jurisdiction over the Churches which lay nearest to him. This compromise took effect, until it was unexpectedly disturbed by the interference of Zosimus on behalf of Patroclus, bishop of Arles, who had obtained that see, in the year 412, by the violent and unmerited deposition of his predecessor Heros. In 417, Zosimus, in compliance with the desire of Patroclus, recognised the bishop of Arles as metropolitan, and required all other persons to do so, under penalty of excommunication. The epistle in which he issued this command, in a matter which lay out of the limits of his lawful jurisdiction, is remarkable for its style of bold and lordly assumption. It begins with, "It has seemed good to the apostolic see" (*Placuit sedi Apostolicæ*)—an expression hitherto unemployed by any of the predecessors of Zosimus; and it affirms that the metropolitan dignity and right belonged from ancient times, to the bishop of Arles, because Trophimus, the first bishop and metropolitan of that city, had been placed in that see by the bishop of Rome, and had thence propagated the Christian faith throughout Gaul,—an unfounded and false assumption. Zosimus, therefore, assigned to the bishop of Arles the right to hear all ecclesiastical causes in his own province, and in all other provinces of Gaul, except such as were of sufficient magnitude to be referred immediately to the apostolic see. In these arbitrary proceedings, however, Zosimus was resisted at first by Hilary, bishop of Vienne, Simplicius of Narbonne, and Proculus of Marseilles. When the two former had yielded to the threats and intimidation of the Roman bishop, Proculus still maintained

his ground; and, although the opposition of Zosimus raised a party against him in his own Church, he retained his diocese until his death in 427, being recognised as a lawful bishop by the Churches of Gaul and of Africa, notwithstanding a command which Zosimus sent to the clergy, magistrates, and other members of the Church at Marseilles, that Proculus should be no longer bishop, but that their Church should be governed by Patroclus, the metropolitan of Arles.

Upon the death of Zosimus, Rome was thrown into commotion by contending factions in the election of his successor. Eulalius, a deacon, was in the first instance chosen by a portion of the clergy and the laity; but Boniface, a presbyter, was afterwards elected by another party of presbyters and people. Symmachus, prefect of the city, endeavoured, for the sake of peace, to prevent the consecration of the latter, but in vain; and he therefore sent a report of the whole proceedings to the emperor Honorius, at Ravenna, in order to obtain a settlement of the question by the emperor's authority. The report of the prefect was in favour of Eulalius; and accordingly the emperor declared his election valid, and ordered Boniface to quit the city, or, if necessary, to be expelled. Boniface at first resisted, but he was compelled to retire; and Eulalius, amidst a large concourse of people, and with great demonstrations of joy, celebrated divine service in the church of St. Peter.\*

A. D. 418.  
Boniface I.

But the presbyters who took part with Boniface sent to the emperor a very different report from that which he had received from Symmachus. They

\* Baron. An. 419, n. 2, 5.

represented the election of Eulalius as having been effected by violence; and declared that the choice of a large majority both of clergy and laity was in favour of Boniface; at the same time entreating the emperor to summon both parties to his presence, and to form his own judgment on the merits of the case. Honorius, in the first instance, referred the matter to a select number of bishops, who met at Ravenna; but, when they could not agree, he convened a large number of bishops from Italy, Gaul, and Africa; commanding both the nominees to remain out of Rome pending the decision of the case, and intrusting the celebration of the Easter festival at Rome to Achilleus, bishop of Spoletum. Eulalius, however, in violation of the emperor's commands, entered Rome. Upon the arrival of Achilleus, some of the people flew to arms, attacked Eulalius and his party, and put even the lives of the prefect and his vicar in jeopardy. This disorderly proceeding decided Honorius in favour of Boniface, whom he immediately recognised as bishop of Rome, with an order for the banishment of Eulalius, and the punishment of all persons who should afterwards appear as his partizans. In a letter from the pro-consul of Africa to the bishop of Carthage, dispensing with the attendance of the African bishops at the intended council, it is expressly assigned as a reason, that Boniface had been confirmed in the episcopal office by the power of the emperor.\*

Boniface, who, being advanced in years, could not expect long to retain possession of the chair, entreated the emperor to take measures for the prevention of disorders in Rome at future elections. Honorius,

\* Baron. An. 419, n. 8, 11, seqq. ; 36, 37.

in reply, forbade all ambitious strivings after the see ; and enacted that, whenever two bishops should be chosen to fill the same vacancy, the election of both should be void. Pagi remarks,\* concerning the tumult which attended this election, that it was this circumstance which led Honorius, and afterwards the kings of Italy, and other princes, to interpose in the election of the Roman bishops,—an evil which, says he, from a slight beginning, eventually brought great disgrace upon the Church of Rome. In point of fact, however, the emperor had taken part in the election of bishops as long since as the time of Damasus ; and it is hard to discern why this should be deemed an evil, unless it were desirable that the civil ruler should leave the Church at full liberty to carry on the election of bishops amidst scenes of confusion and bloodshed.

Boniface, less violent than Zosimus, was, however, zealous and active in maintaining the claims which had been advanced by his predecessors. He talked loudly of the supremacy of St. Peter, and of the authority of that apostle as still residing in the Church of Rome ; and he endeavoured to impress strongly on the minds of other bishops, especially those who were subject to the jurisdiction of his vicar, the bishop of Thessalonica, an idea of the virtue of submission.

Protogenes had been appointed metropolitan bishop of Corinth ; and Boniface had confirmed him in this dignity, by Rufus, his vicar in the province of Illyricum. Some neighbouring bishops, however, having desired that the matter should be submitted to the decision of a provincial council, Rufus complained to

\* Pagi, Crit. Baron. ad a. 419, n. 2.

Boniface that his vicariat was thus brought into contempt, without his fault. Boniface willingly accepted this apology, exhorted him to exercise increased zeal in supporting the apostolic chair, and pronounced invalid every council, and every consecration of a bishop, which should take place in the province without his concurrence. At the same time he administered a sharp rebuke to the Illyrian bishops,—told them that their conduct was an insult to the apostle Peter, without whose favour, inasmuch as the keys of the kingdom of heaven had been committed to him, no one could enter heaven, of which he kept the door,—explained to them the high dignity of the Roman Church, from which even those Churches which were next to it in rank (those of Alexandria and Antioch) had often sought help and assistance,—and reminded them that “the apostle Peter, by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, had already confirmed Protogenes in his episcopal dignity.”

But in this same year, 421, while Boniface was thus earnestly maintaining his assumed authority over Eastern Illyricum by his vicar the bishop of Thessalonica, it was altogether denied to him by an edict of the younger Theodosius, emperor of the East. This prince issued an injunction\* to the prefect of Illyricum, to the effect that “the ancient customs and ecclesiastical laws should be observed, without any innovation, throughout the whole province of Illyricum; and that if any doubt should arise concerning their administration, it should not be settled without the consent of the bishop of Constantinople (which city possessed the privileges of old Rome), in a council of bishops.” Some say that Theodosius

\* Lib. 6, Cod. Just. de Sacros. Eccles.



revoked this edict in 422, at the request of his uncle, the emperor Honorius ; but, if this had been the case, it is hardly likely that the edict would have been embodied in both the Theodosian and Justinian codes, without any counteraction. Besides this, no other accounts confirm this revocation ; and there are marks of spuriousness upon the epistles said to have passed between the two princes on this subject.

In an epistle addressed to Hilary, bishop of Narbonne, Boniface revoked the privileges which Patroclus, bishop of Arles, had artfully obtained from Zosimus : he admitted that, by the arrangement of his predecessor, the canon of Nicæa relating to the privileges of metropolitans had been violated,—confirmed the bishops of Marseilles and Narbonne in their ancient rights,—and enjoined them not to allow the bishop of Arles to exercise any jurisdiction in the territories committed to their charge.

Cælestinus succeeded Boniface in 422. During his episcopate a long-agitated question concerning the right of receiving appeals at Rome from foreign provinces was brought to an issue. A controversy on this subject with the bishops of Africa, distinguished by perfidy on the part of Rome, and by stedfast and uncompromising principle on the part of its opponents, had commenced during the episcopate of Zosimus. Apiarius, a presbyter of Sicca in Numidia, had been excommunicated and deposed by his bishop Urbanus, on account of various crimes. The aggrieved presbyter instantly repaired to Rome, where he was received into communion by Zosimus, in defiance of some of the oldest and most universally recognised laws of the Church. This proceeding having excited great dissatisfaction in Africa, Zosimus sent an Italian

A. D. 422.  
Cælestinus  
I.

bishop Faustinus, and two presbyters, to Carthage, to defend his conduct. These envoys presented an epistle from Zosimus to a council of 217 bishops, assembled at Carthage, and demanded the restoration of Apiarius to his former rights and privileges. In their reply to Boniface (after the death of Zosimus), the assembled bishops reported that they had admitted Apiarius to communion after having implored pardon for his offences, and that they had restored him to his rank of presbyter; but that, looking to the future, and consulting for the order and welfare of the Church, inasmuch as several such cases had already occurred, they could not permit him to resume his functions at Sicca; only they gave him an opportunity of obtaining an appointment elsewhere. But Faustinus and his colleagues brought with them from Rome written instructions to urge points of a more general and decisive nature than the mere restoration of an individual presbyter on the present occasion: and the chief of these points was, that no opposition should hereafter be offered to appeals made to Rome by African bishops; for, said Zosimus, it was decreed by the Council of Nicæa, that if a bishop deposed by a provincial council should appeal from that decision to the judgment of a bishop of Rome, it should be competent for the latter, if he saw reason for a new examination of the case, to send an injunction to the neighbouring bishops to institute a fresh inquiry; or, if he pleased, he might send one of his own presbyters, or several of his clergy, in order to sit as assessors with the bishops in hearing again the case of the accused. This was startling intelligence to the assembled bishops. They were ready, they said, to obey the canons of the Nicene council; but such an

one as that which had now been recited they had never read in their Greek copies of the canons of that council; and therefore they called upon their president, Aurelius, bishop of Carthage (*sanctus papa Aurelius*), to write to the bishops of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, in order to procure new copies of the Nicene canons, which these bishops should certify as genuine and correct; and they requested Boniface also to procure for himself authorised copies from the same quarter. The bishops were right in their doubt as to the authenticity of the pretended canon of Nicæa. In due time copies of the canons were received from Constantinople and Alexandria, accompanied with epistles from the bishops of those Churches; and the suspicions of the African bishops were confirmed by the clear and undeniable fact that no such canon as that which Zosimus quoted was to be found among them. The truth was that the so-called Nicene canon was one that had been passed by the Council of Sardica, which, as we have already seen, voted away the ecclesiastical liberties of the West in favour of the bishop of Rome. In vain do some Roman Catholic writers\* endeavour to give a satisfactory explanation of the conduct of Zosimus; others, even of the same communion, † concur with Protestant historians in charging him with the practice of a wilful fraud for the purpose of promoting his ambitious views. As for the Council of Sardica, its decrees were not any way binding on the bishops of Africa; and it appears that they were not even aware of their existence. At the same time they were too prudent to receive the unfounded asser-

c. g. Baronius, An. 419, n. 87, 89.

† Richer, Du Fin.

tions of an ambitious bishop, who was attempting to gain their submission by dishonest trickery, and too wary even to listen to the advice of his delegates, who advised them to entrust the necessary investigation of the Nicene canons to their master himself.

After this, Apiarius, having been admitted presbyter, had again been deposed by his bishop on account of disorderly conduct. Again he repaired to Rome, where Cælestinus was now bishop, who gave him that hearty welcome which every one was sure to find whose visit to that city was likely to lead to an extension of its bishop's jurisdiction, or to an increase of his power. Cælestinus readily espoused his cause, and sent him back to Africa, in company with Faustinus, in order to procure his restoration. The result of this mission appears from an epistle addressed to Cælestinus by the African bishops, probably after a council at Carthage in 424 or 425. This is a remarkable document, written in a true spirit of independence, and throwing much light on the method of proceeding adopted by the bishop of Rome, and on the judgment which was passed upon it by his contemporaries. The bishops told their "dear lord and honourable brother Cælestinus" that upon the arrival of Faustinus they had assembled, in the hope that he had been sent with the means and for the purpose of effectually clearing Apiarius of the grave charges which had been preferred against him. Instead, however, of promoting a fair investigation of the case, Faustinus had acted the part of a patron of the accused; and, under the pretence of maintaining the rights of the Church of Rome, had used insolent language towards themselves, and had demanded that they should receive Apiarius into communion, simply

because Cælestinus had admitted him to communion in Rome,—a circumstance which, however, had taken place only in consequence of an unwarranted appeal. After an examination of the case during three days, in the midst of hindrances thrown in their way by Faustinus, and notwithstanding the persevering attempts of Apiarius to hide his guilt, he had, however, at length been compelled by God and his conscience to make confession of his enormous crimes. They therefore entreated Cælestinus not to give so ready a reception to any who might come to him from the African churches in future, nor to admit those to his communion whom they had excluded from their own; for your reverence (*venerabilitas tua*) may easily perceive, said they, that this also is forbidden by the Nicene council. “The Nicene canons,” they said, “manifestly submit all orders of the clergy, even bishops themselves, to their metropolitan. For the authors of those canons perceived clearly enough that all disputes ought to be adjusted in the place in which they arise.” They told Cælestinus that they could find no warrant in the ancient laws of the Church for his sending extraordinary envoys from himself (*a sanctitatis suæ latere*) to them; and that, as for what Zosimus had cited as out of the Nicene canon, they could find no trace of it in the genuine copies which they had procured. “We desire, therefore,” they said in conclusion, “that for the future you send to us none of your clergy, at the request of any one whatever, for the fulfilment of your wishes, in order that we may not introduce the vain pride and ambition of the world (*fumosum typhum sæculi*) into the Church of Christ, which holds forth the light of simplicity and humility to those who desire to see God.

As to our brother Faustinus, we are satisfied that after the excommunication of Apiarius on account of his criminal conduct, by the justice and moderation of your holiness, our brotherly love will not be interrupted by being made to endure his presence in Africa.”

This was decisive; Cælestinus appears to have felt the necessity of yielding to the well-merited rebuke, and we do not find that he urged his claims any further.

In the case of Proclus, nominated as bishop of Constantinople, Cælestinus gave it as his opinion that there was no impediment to the translation of bishops. This decision was contrary to ancient laws; and it has been remarked as no unimportant step towards supremacy, that the bishop of Rome thus undertook to dispense with the canons of a General Council.

A. D. 432.  
Sixtus III.

Cælestinus was succeeded by Sixtus III., who earnestly endeavoured to rivet the fetters which had already been forged for the bishops of Eastern Illyricum. These bishops were by no means so willing to part with their independence as the bishops of Rome were to deprive them of it: their subordination to the Roman see, in the person of the bishop of Thessalonica as a deputy, or vicar, was an innovation which had not been sanctioned by any General Council, and which they themselves had not formally recognised. But these things were treated with indifference by the bishops of Rome, who now began to regard it as their province rather to give laws than to wait for or observe them. Rufus, bishop of Thessalonica, having died in 431, Sixtus invested his successor Anastasius with the same authority over the bishops of Illyricum which had been committed to and exercised by his pre-

decessor, and demanded the compliance of Perigenes, bishop of Corinth, who had withstood the usurpation. The Illyrian bishops were declared by Sixtus not bound to obey the decrees of any eastern council without the ratification of the Roman see,—a decree directed perhaps especially against a canon of a General Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), which enacted that no bishop should assume authority in a province that had not always belonged to his diocese, “in order that the liberty which Christ had purchased with his blood might not be gradually lost.”\*

Hitherto the progress of Romish despotism had not been assisted by any distinguished abilities on the part of those who successively occupied the so-called chair of St. Peter. But, after the death of Sixtus, the management of the rising monarchy was intrusted to a man whose personal genius and skill contributed not a little to establish and advance its pretensions.

Leo, as a Roman deacon or archdeacon, had already become so distinguished by his power of persuasion, and his skilful management of affairs, that he had been despatched by Valentinian III. into Gaul, to mediate between the rivals Actius and Albinus; and he was absent on that mission when he was recalled to succeed Sixtus in the bishopric of Rome, to which he had been unanimously elected by the clergy and people. On his assumption of office, he delivered an eloquent sermon, in which he declared the preaching of the word to be one of his most sacred and important duties. Ninety-six (genuine) sermons of Leo are extant. He always preached on the anniversary of his accession; † and in these sermons he speaks much of his own unworthiness,

A. D. 440.  
Leo I.

\* Conc. Ephes. A. D. 431.

† Sermones de Natali.

which, however, is always coupled with the mention of St. Peter, whose successor he declared himself to be, and whose authority he commends to universal respect, as admitting of no infringement. In his sermon on the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, Leo speaks of Rome as “the holy and elect people, the priestly and royal city, which has become the head of the world through the holy chair of St. Peter, and has a far more extended dominion by means of the Christian religion than by its earthly power.” The praise of eloquence has been too lavishly bestowed upon these sermons; but they are remarkable on account of the pretensions which they contain, and as being the earliest extant examples of homiletical discourses by a Roman bishop.

The epistles of Leo, however, are far more numerous and important than his sermons; and his powers as a preacher, whatever they may have been, are quite eclipsed by his skill and labours in the government of the Church and the advancement of its interests. He expelled the Manichees from Rome; checked the progress of Pelagianism; made vigorous attempts to crush the remnant of the Priscillianists; and employed great and successful exertions for the condemnation of the Eutychian doctrine. At the same time he was strict and zealous in the enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline, and in maintaining and improving the constitution of the Church; but when even the oldest laws of the Church stood in the way of his great and favourite object—the advancement of the Roman see—they were forced to give way. Leo found means on several occasions to render important services to the civil government.



We know little of the early acts of this episcopate ; but we find that Leo's attention was soon directed to the enforcing of the Roman authority in Illyricum. After the death of Sixtus, Anastasius, the Roman vicar, applied to Leo for the confirmation of his authority ; either because it was not yet understood that the office was permanent, and it was supposed to depend upon the pleasure of each successive Roman bishop, or else because some fresh opposition had been offered by the Illyrian bishops. Leo acceded to his request, with an emphasis of bold assertion and haughty claims.\* In 441, he sent word to the metropolitans of those parts, that, by virtue of his care for all Churches, which devolved upon him from the primacy of St. Peter, he had appointed Anastasius as his vicar, to whom they were bound to submit, as to himself : and he declared it to be his will that they should be as subordinate to his vicar as the bishops of their provinces were to themselves ; that they should appear at every council which he should summon ; and that all disputes between bishops should be referred to him, who had instructions to refer the more weighty matters or appeals to himself for a final decision. He also gave instructions to Anastasius not to fail in the exercise of his authority ; but when a metropolitan (Atticus, bishop of Nicopolis, in Epirus), with the bishops of his province, appealed to Rome on account of some harsh treatment by Anastasius, Leo reminded his vicar that he had only devolved upon him a part of his cares, but had by no means invested him with his own full powers (*plenitudinem potestatis*). He reminded him also that all bishops were in fact substantially equal,

\* Leonis, Ep. 5.

and that all must look up in the last instance to their head at Rome.\*

These claims on the obedience of Illyricum, although comparatively novel, and, in fact, usurped, were gradually recognised during the episcopate of Leo. And hence he was encouraged to make similar attempts against the liberties of other Churches. We have seen that the African bishops long maintained their ground firmly against Roman usurpation; but at length the troubles occasioned by the irruption of the Vandals made them more compliant. It had become important to secure the alliance and good offices of so powerful a neighbour as the bishop of Rome; and these advantages were to be obtained, as usual, on only one condition—that of submission to his authority.

Even the patriarch of Alexandria (Dioscorus) was served by Leo with a notice,—written indeed, to a great extent, in smooth and courteous language, and not without the assignment of reasons,—yet still a plain notice, that the customs of the Church of Alexandria must be conformed to those of Rome. It is by no means probable that the prescribed regulations were adopted at Alexandria; but the temper, and, we may add, the skill, with which they were dictated, remain the same.

Hilary, bishop of Arles, distinguished not only for a large share of the monkish piety of his times, but also for real humility, and for ability and zeal in the discharge of his office, was a marked object of the domineering spirit and ambitious designs of Leo. The bishop of Arles, after some dispute, had been established in the dignity of metropolitan of Gal-

\* Ep. 14.

lia Narbonensis. As such he had presided in a provincial council at Riez, in Provence,\* A.D. 439, by which a sentence of degradation was passed upon Armentarius, who had been uncanonically elected and consecrated bishop of Ebredunum (Embrun, in Dauphiny). In 441 he again presided at a council at Orange,† which enacted some laws concerning the clergy and Church discipline, exhibiting, in some respects, the customs of Gaul at variance with those of Rome; and the canons of this council were confirmed by another at Arles,‡ under Hilary, in 443, when the right of the bishop of Arles, as metropolitan, to convene such councils was again solemnly affirmed. In 444 Hilary presided at a council (probably at Vesontio, *hodie* Besançon) which deposed Celidonius, a Gallican bishop, most probably bishop of Vesontio, or at all events of some place which seems not to have been within the limits of the jurisdiction of Arles, but where Hilary may have presided by consent of the proper metropolitan. Celidonius immediately repaired to Rome with complaints of unjust treatment, where he seems to have been admitted to communion,—an act which, in the case of a deposed bishop, was contrary to the existing ecclesiastical laws. Hilary likewise went to Rome,—on foot, it is said, in the depth of winter,—where he expressed his surprise that a bishop deposed in Gaul should be received in the Church at Rome,—entreated Leo not to violate the ancient constitution of the Church,—and desired that the matter might be settled by a private order for the exclusion of Celidonius, in order that there might be no dispute

\* Conc. Regens. A. D. 439.

† Conc. Arausiæ. A. D. 441.

‡ Conc. Arelat. A. D. 443, can. 18.

between himself and Leo, and that his visit to Rome might appear to have been undertaken merely that he might pay his respects to Leo. But Leo was not to be so easily persuaded; and Hilary, on his part, remained firm in his refusal to admit Celidonius to communion, while he was little disposed to allow the right of the bishop of Rome to set aside the sentence in the capacity of a higher judge, and thus to decide at Rome upon a cause which could properly be heard only in Gaul. Leo, however, gave hearing to Celidonius, acquitted him, and restored him to his see. Encouraged by these proceedings, the enemies of Hilary in Gaul, who were numerous, transmitted to Rome certain complaints of what they represented as his acts of maladministration in his diocese; and, in particular, another bishop, Projectus, whom he had hastily deposed during a season of sickness, made his complaint, and claimed restoration to his office. The complaint was admitted without giving Hilary an opportunity of explanation or defence, and Projectus was restored to his see by Leo. Tillemont remarks, that it is hard to say why Leo did not immediately depose Hilary, against whom so many complaints were made; but perhaps he knew that such a measure would not be tolerated in Gaul. In 445 Leo addressed to the bishops of Vienne an epistle filled with violent abuse of Hilary, and with arrogant pretensions on the part of the apostolic see.\* He insisted upon the doctrine that the chief authority in the Church had been committed by Christ to St. Peter, as the centre of unity, and that every one must be cut off from the benefits of the Christian religion who should not build upon the foundation

\* Leon. Ep. 10, A. D. 445.

which had thus been laid, or who should presume to weaken the authority of St. Peter's successors. He affirmed that the apostolic see had always taken charge of the Gallican Churches; that it had been frequently consulted by their bishops; and that appeals had been of old carried from Gaul to Rome, by means of which sentences passed in Gaul had been either revoked or confirmed. "Hilary, however," continued Leo, "has dared to violate this ancient and wholesome practice, and he desires to have you all under his own rule without being himself subject to the apostle Peter, appointing bishops at his pleasure, and assuming the rights of the metropolitans; he uses haughty and disrespectful language with regard to that blessed apostle to whom has been committed the supreme power to bind and to loose, and the chief care of feeding the sheep of Christ's flock." And then Leo pronounces Hilary excommunicated from the apostolic see; declares him incompetent to consecrate or even to assist at the consecration of bishops, or to convene councils; decrees that he shall not retain jurisdiction over the province of Vienne, which he affirms that he had unjustly acquired; and ordains that if it should be necessary to convene a council of several provinces in Gaul, such council should be under the presidency of a certain bishop named Leontius, on account of his venerable age.

All this was quite in keeping with the character of Leo; but it was hasty and unjust. If Hilary had been guilty of misdemeanours, his proper judges were the other metropolitans of Gaul in a council lawfully convened. In these proceedings, however, we find a proof of the actual possession of power, which Leo, no less ambitious and bold than many of his prede-

cessors, but more skilful and crafty than any of them, knew how to employ in acts of oppressive aggression.

A. D. 445,  
Edict of  
Valentinian  
III.

Leo took occasion of this controversy with Hilary to obtain from the young and weak emperor, Valentinian III., an edict greatly in favour of the pretensions of the Romish see;—an edict of which Tillemont truly says that it can neither confer honour upon him whom it commends, nor inflict disgrace upon him whom it censures, in the estimation of any persons who love the liberties of the Church, or who have any knowledge of its constitution. In this edict, addressed to Aëtius, the Roman general in Gaul, the emperor says that “he expects to receive the Divine protection for his empire, chiefly through the maintenance of the Christian faith within it. And seeing that the primate of the apostolic see has been established in his dignity by the primacy of St. Peter, by the dignity of the city of Rome, and by the respect paid to him by a holy council, therefore no one may presume to act without permission of this see, since the peace of the Church can be maintained only when the whole Church recognises its ruler (*si rectorem suum agnoscat universitas*). Hitherto,” continues the emperor, “this practice has been invariably observed; but now, according to the faithful report of the bishop Leo (*Romani papæ*, afterwards also *urbis papæ*, or *urbis Romanæ pontificis*), Hilary, without his consent, has committed many atrocious acts against the majesty of the realm, and derogatory to the dignity of the apostolic see. Leo has accordingly pronounced a sentence against Hilary, which, of itself, and without any imperial ratification, is valid in Gaul; for what is there which ought not to be con-

ceded to the respect due to so great a bishop from all the Churches? At the same time the emperor is bound to take care that no ecclesiastical disturbances arise, and that no one resist the command of the Romish bishop. He, therefore, decrees that neither the bishops of Gaul, nor those in any other part of the Roman empire, shall attempt anything against the ancient customs without the consent of the bishop of Rome; rather, they should receive as law that which is, or may hereafter be, prescribed to them by the apostolic see; and every bishop who, being summoned by the bishop of Rome, may refuse to appear before him, shall be compelled so to do by the governor of his province." Thus the authority which the bishop of Rome had hitherto claimed, by virtue of the canons of Sardica, was now confirmed to him by command of the emperor; that is to say, his right of an appellate jurisdiction, and therefore practically, to a great extent, his supremacy over the Churches of the West, was established by imperial Roman law. Hilary was now effectually humbled; for, though we do not find that he admitted the validity of the sentence which Leo had issued against him, yet neither did he meet it with any resolute opposition: he appears to have spent the short remainder of his life in the retired and peaceable discharge of his episcopal duties at Arles, leaving the victory very much in the hands of his energetic and wily opponent. Celidonius probably retained the bishopric of Vesontio, in which he had been reinstated by Leo. The bishops who elected Ravennius as his successor, in 449, sent notice of this election to Leo, and requested him to restore the ancient privilege to this metropolitan, on the ground of the (fabulous) foundation of the bishopric

of Arles by Trophimus, a disciple of St. Peter. In 450, Leo pronounced his decision, to the effect that the bishop of Vienne (who had also applied for his support) should possess jurisdiction over the bishops of Valentia, Tarantasia, Genava, and Gratianopolis (Valence, Tarentaise, Geneve, Grenoble); and that all the other bishopries in that part should be subject to the bishop of Arles, who thus became the chief metropolitan. In this way the authority of the bishop of Rome was extended over a considerable portion of Gaul.

Council of  
Chalcedon,  
A. D. 451.

In 448, Eutyches broached his strange doctrines concerning the person of Christ, at Constantinople; and his errors were condemned in the General Council of Chalcedon in 451. On this occasion the bishop of Rome was represented in the council by two legates (a latere), who were seated next to the imperial commissioner, and were suffered to perpetrate an act of usurpation by pronouncing judgment upon a convicted bishop, named Dioscurus, in the name of the pope, as if by his supreme authority. At this council, however, a canon was made, declaring that the bishop of Constantinople, or new Rome, possessed equal privileges or rights with the bishop of old Rome, and was next to him in place. Against this Leo vehemently protested, taking his stand upon the canons of Sardica, under the name of Canons of Nicæa. He declared,—not that he was the head of the universal Church, nor that Rome, by Divine right, was the mother and mistress of all Churches,—but that the canon was opposed to the sixth canon of the Council of Nicæa. “He refused obedience; and threatened to separate Anatolius, the bishop of Constantinople, from his communion, if he should persist



in allowing the decree. Though all the bishops of the council were offended at this presumption, the emperor yielded. He requested Anatolius to accede to the demands of Leo. Truth was sacrificed to the love of peace; and usurpation was rewarded for its perseverance by another successful step in the road to unlimited supremacy. The warfare between the two first Churches of the Catholic Church began; and it proceeded till they became most bitter enemies, and renounced for ever all mutual communion.”\* In this matter, we may observe, the claims of Leo were opposed not only to the real canons of Nicæa, which permitted the decisions of one General Council to be revised or revoked by another, but also to those of the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381.

Shortly afterwards Attila invaded Italy (A.D. 452), where, having sacked and plundered several important towns, he was about to fall upon Rome, which had been left comparatively defenceless. In this emergency, the Emperor Valentinian determined to send an embassy, in order, if possible, to make terms with the formidable invader. Leo was conspicuous in this embassy; and it was chiefly by his means that the king was persuaded to renounce hostilities, and to promise to retire beyond the Danube. Some have supposed that the personal influence of Leo in this instance has been overrated, and that Attila was determined chiefly by other considerations, including an engagement on the part of the emperor to pay an annual tribute; while, on the other hand, in order to heighten the effect supposed to have been produced by the ecclesiastical portion of the embassy, fable has been added to the history, and it has been pretended

\* Townsend, Eccl. and Civil Hist. book 2, chap. 9.

that the apostle Peter himself, in full pontificals, with majestic mien, and bearing the venerable marks of old age, stood by the side of Leo with a drawn sword in his hand, and threatened Attila with a terrible death if he did not comply with the demands of the Romish bishop. This was reported, says the fable, by Attila himself, when his friends asked him why he made such a compromise.

A. D. 455.

There is stronger evidence to the fact that, three years later, Leo saved Rome from destruction by his intercession with an enemy. Genseric, king of the Vandals, in Africa, having been invited to revenge the wrongs of the murdered Valentinian, and of his widowed empress, who had been compelled to marry the murderer Maximus, advanced to the neighbourhood of Rome with a fleet and army, and compelled an immediate surrender. Leo could not save the city from plunder; but he successfully pleaded with the barbarian king to secure it from the horrors of massacre and fire. On this occasion many prisoners were carried away to Africa as slaves, where they succeeded in converting not a few of their masters to the Christian faith, and afterwards, at their request, received from Leo a body of clergy to superintend their new Church.

From this period to the end of his life Leo appears to have been chiefly engaged in the affairs of the Eutychian controversy, and in settling matters of ecclesiastical discipline. We find a remarkable injunction in one of his epistles,\* addressed to certain Italian bishops. Having given directions that baptism should be administered, as far as possible, only at Easter and Whitsuntide, he proceeds to call for the

\* Ep. 168.

abolition of a custom which he declares to have been introduced by some of them in contravention of an apostolic rule. "When the faithful are called upon to perform penances," says he, "they shall not hereafter be required to read a written confession of their sins publicly before the Church, since it is sufficient that the guilt with which their consciences are burdened shall have been indicated to the priests alone in a private confession. It is, indeed, a commendable strength of faith, which, in the fear of God, does not refuse to suffer shame before men; but, inasmuch as some persons may have committed sins which they may be afraid to confess thus openly, this bad custom shall be laid aside, in order that it may not happen that many be deterred from that method of cure which comes in the exercise of penance, either through feelings of shame, or under fear lest their confession may expose them to some penalty of the law. That confession is sufficient which is made first to God, and then to *the priest, who intercedes as mediator for the sins of the penitent*. In this way, larger numbers will be excited to the performance of the penance, when the consciences of those who confess are not laid bare to the whole body of the people." To say the least, this regulation of Leo must have had the effect, on the one hand, of removing a formidable check to vice in a licentious age, and, on the other, of exalting the credit of confession in general estimation. As to the ground of priestly mediation which is here taken, it is in accordance with the false teaching of preceding centuries.

Leo died in 461, and was buried in St. Peter's A. D. 461. church, where it was maintained that the remains of St. Peter and St. Paul had been deposited. His eminent talents, combined with a certain power of

eloquence, his dexterity in the development and defence of orthodox doctrine and in the advancement of theological learning, his earnest and often well-applied zeal, his influence at court, and the important services which he rendered to the state, his weight in the religious controversies, and in the councils, of his time, and, above all, his lofty and daring spirit, his incessant efforts for strengthening and enlarging the authority of the apostolic see, and the success with which these efforts were crowned, were qualities and successes quite sufficient to exalt him to high consideration in the Church of Rome. In the course of centuries his relics were scattered far and wide; and the Roman Calendar has a day (April 11) set apart in commemoration of him. As late as 1754, Benedict XIV., who, as a canon of St. Peter's, had assisted at a new translation of Leo's remains, assigned to him the title of Doctor Ecclesiæ in the highest sense, and made a revision of the Liturgy appointed for his festival.

A. D. 461.  
Hilary.

Hilary, a Roman archdeacon, who had often been employed by Leo as his delegate to the Oriental councils, was chosen to succeed him; and soon made it appear that he was prepared, as far as possible, to follow in his steps. Soon after his election, he sent notices of "his elevation," to Leontius, bishop of Arles, in order that he and all the bishops of his province, to whom he was commissioned to communicate this intelligence, might rejoice at the event, and pray for the welfare of the whole Church. In this epistle Hilary reminded the metropolitan of the primacy of St. Peter; and he speedily found occasion for an exercise of his assumed authority over the Gallican Church. Rusticus, metropolitan of Narbonne, had appointed his archdeacon Hermes to the see of Beziers; and when the

members of that Church refused to accept him as their bishop, he nominated him as his own successor. Leo, to whom an account of these proceedings had been transmitted, had already marked them with his disapprobation ; and when Frederic, son of Theodorie, who ruled in these parts of Gaul as king of the Visigoths, wrote to Hilary informing him that Hermes was actually in possession of the bishopric of Narbonne, the Roman bishop expressed his strong displeasure at the circumstance, and sent a haughty reprimand to Leontius for not having informed him of so singular a proceeding which had taken place in a province “belonging to his monarchy” (that is, to the metropolitan province of Leontius),—an expression quite in accordance with the sentiments of one who not only regarded himself as a monarch in the Church, but, while he claimed supremacy over all other bishops, expected the people to regard them only as lesser monarchs than himself. Hilary now convened a council (A.D. 462), including some Gallican bishops, by which the nomination of Hermes was declared uncanonical, while yet, for the sake of peace, it was confirmed ; only, in order that this case might not be drawn into a dangerous precedent, Hermes was not permitted to exercise his metropolitan right in the consecration of bishops, which was transferred to the senior bishop of his province. Hermes appears to have been appointed successor to Rusticus with the consent of the clergy and people of Narbonne ; but he was an object of hatred to Frederic, an Arian prince, who, however, Arian though he was, was designated by Hilary his “son in the faith ;” his call upon the Roman see to interfere in the affairs of the Gallican Church being perhaps regarded as a merit

more than sufficient to counterbalance his heretical opinions. It may here be remarked that the quarrels which had subsisted for half a century among the bishops of Eastern Gaul, concerning their relative authority and jurisdiction, had greatly favoured the attempts of the Romish bishops to obtain ecclesiastical supremacy in those parts. These bishops, in order that they might weaken or overpower each other, sought the support of their more powerful neighbour, the bishop of Rome; who did not lose the opportunity of advancing his own interests, by favouring one party at one time and the other at another; and who speedily gained the credit of having been their sovereign master from the very origin of Christianity. The bishop of Rome may be regarded as having now established his supremacy in Gaul.

It was a favourable circumstance for Roman pontiffs, that, in those parts which were under the power of the German tribes, or where they divided the power with the Romans, reference was continually made to Rome, even on the part of Arian princes (such as the Burgundian kings), concerning the administration of ecclesiastical affairs. Mamertus, bishop of Vienne, had consecrated a bishop of Dia Vocontiorum (Die, in Dauphiny), notwithstanding that this town, according to the recent regulation of Leo, was within the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Arles, instead of that of Vienne. Hilary, having received an account of this transaction from Gundiac, king of the Burgundians, wrote in return to Leontius, bishop of Arles, expressing his surprise that he had not sent him information of the affair, and enjoining him to summon Mamertus before a council, where he should give sentence upon him according to the dictates

of the Holy Ghost;—that very metropolitan with whom the metropolitan of Vienne had been so long in conflict being thus appointed as his judge. Upon this Leontius and twenty neighbouring bishops wrote to Hilary; who sent back word that, for the sake of peace, Mamertus, whose reputation for sanctity, it may be remarked, was very high in Gaul, should be exempt from punishment, but that he must correct his faults, and promise that for the future he would conform to the regulations of Leo. In this letter the Roman bishop founds his claims of dominion over all other bishops upon the fore-cited law of Valentinian III.

The bishops of Tarragona in Spain, with their metropolitan Arsanius, wrote to Hilary, in 464 and 465, asking his advice on two separate points. One of these related to Silvanus, a bishop of that province, who had in several particulars violated the ecclesiastical laws, and whom they had failed to reduce to submission. They desired the opinion of Hilary as to the course to be pursued with respect to him; requesting to receive instructions from a place where, as they said, nothing was done by mistake or under the influence of prejudice, but everything was recommended with the sanction of episcopal deliberation. Instead of attending to their complaint, Hilary wrote back word that several persons had pleaded in favour of Silvanus, although confessing his irregularities, and that he had forgiven him his offences, on condition that he should hereafter perform no uncanonical consecrations, and that the bishops whom he had irregularly appointed should retain their offices, provided that they had neither married widows, nor had been twice married themselves. Another case, which the

Spanish bishops referred to his consideration was that of Irenæus, bishop of a small town in the territory of Barcelona, who had been elected by the clergy and people of the chief city of that province as their bishop, with consent of the Spanish bishops, the former bishop of Barcelona having not only made him his heir, but recommended him as his successor. They were induced by the governor of their province to seek from Hilary a confirmation of this arrangement, of the lawfulness of which they had themselves no doubt. Hilary, however, declared such appointment entirely invalid, translation of bishops having been expressly forbidden by the ecclesiastical laws. We may reckon this as one proof among many of the general ignorance on the part of the bishops concerning the state of ecclesiastical law,—an ignorance which was of great advantage to the Roman pontiff, as occasioning frequent reference to him. And if there was this ignorance in bishops, bishops assembled in councils, concerning that to which they attached so much importance, what must have been the case with the people? Hilary probably caused this matter to be decided in a council (chiefly of Italian bishops) at Rome, 465.

The emperor Anthemius, on his arrival at Rome, having been induced to issue a decree for the toleration of all religious sects in that city, Hilary resisted this decree with such determination and success, that the emperor was obliged to revoke it.\*

A. D. 468.  
Simplicius. Simplicius succeeded Hilary in 468. During his episcopate the western Roman empire was finally overthrown, and ceased to exist even in name, Italy itself having fallen under the power of Odoacer.

\* L'Art de Vérifier les Dates.



The barbarian king, although an Arian in religion, was yet tolerant of the orthodox faith, and the Church of Rome was free from molestation during his reign. Simplicius was, however, at this time disturbed by jealousy towards the rival patriarch of Constantinople. Acacius, in the year 472, began to insist upon the rights which had been secured to him by the twenty-eighth canon of the council of Chalcedon, but had hitherto been disputed by the patriarch of Rome. Some have supposed, indeed, that he sought for not mere equality of rights, according to that canon, but even for precedence in rank, on the ground that such precedence had been originally accorded to Rome on account of the magnitude and importance of the city as metropolis of the empire, and that, since the fall of the western portion of the empire, this dignity now belonged, not to Rome, but to Constantinople.\* It is not certain that the pretensions of Acacius extended thus far; but it is clear that he gave Simplicius much trouble during a series of years, partly by urging his claims to an equality of rights and privileges, which the other stoutly denied, and partly also by his arbitrary or inconsistent proceedings with regard to the Eutychian controversy, in which Simplicius was deeply involved.

In the West, Simplicius exercised and enlarged the bounds of his authority without opposition. He appointed Zeno, bishop of Seville, his vicar in Spain.

After the death of Simplicius in 483, when the A. D. 483 senate, clergy, and people were assembled in St. Peter's for the election of his successor, they were surprised at the appearance of Basil, prætorian prefect and lieutenant of Odoacer, who expressed his aston-

\* Baron. An. 472, n. 5.

ishment that, in the unsettled state of the Roman Church, they had ventured to undertake any measures without his consent and co-operation,—a line of proceeding which, he said, they would not have been warranted in adopting even if Simplicius had been alive. It was his province, he asserted, at the election of a bishop, to take care of the peace of the Church and of that of the State; and they ought to remember how earnestly Simplicius had urged him not to permit the election of a successor without his consent. Basil hereupon proposed to the senate and clergy to pass a law to the effect that no Roman bishop should hereafter be permitted to sell any of the possessions or property of the Church, under penalty of excommunication to be incurred by himself and the purchaser. A report of these proceedings is preserved in the acts of a council held afterwards at Rome (A.D. 502) under Symmachus, in which the assembled bishops vehemently and indignantly protested against the conduct of Basil, and declared that it was utterly illegal for him as a layman to endeavour to control the election of a bishop. But it ought to be remembered that such elections had already given occasion to feuds and disturbances at Rome, and were sometimes attended with bloodshed; and it was undoubtedly the province of the civil magistrate to hinder these things, while it was of great importance for the future peace of the city that a man of temperate views should be chosen to fill the chair, rather than one of an opposite character. This council passed a law similar to that which had been proposed by Basil, but at the same time declared that it was valid only by virtue of its present enactments.

There can be no doubt that Basil had a large share

in the election of the immediate successor of Simplicius, Felix II. Felix became deeply engaged in the Eutyechian controversies; and proceeded even to the extraordinary length of pronouncing sentence of excommunication and deposition against Peter the Fuller, bishop of Antioch, and Acacius, bishop of Constantinople. Tillemont remarks upon the humility and confession of Felix in his letters on this occasion, especially in that addressed to the emperor Zeno: but the spirit which was veiled under these mild and gentle expressions was anything but gentle. Felix distinctly claimed no less than absolute authority for the Roman see as the head of the universal Church; and we find him speaking of the Roman pontiff as the vicar of St. Peter, who was himself the vicar of Christ.

Felix II. was succeeded by Gelasius I., in the year 492. He persevered in the measures which had already been commenced against the Oriental bishops. Various spurious writings have been attributed to this patriarch; but there is a remarkable fragment of an epistle of his, addressed to two bishops, concerning the administration of the holy communion, which is undoubtedly genuine. "We have learnt," says he, "that there are some persons who receive only the sacred body, but refrain from partaking of the cup of the sacred blood. Let these persons, who are entangled in some doctrinal error, either receive the whole sacrament, or be refused the whole, since the dividing of one and the same mystery cannot take place without great sacrilege." How opposed this is to the more modern practice of the Church of Rome needs not be said. This prohibition was directed against the Manichees, who appear to have been again

A. D. 492.  
Gelasius I.

making progress about this time in Rome and other parts of Italy.

A decree, said to have been made by Gelasius in a council at Rome, A.D. 494, fixing the canon of Scripture (including certain apocryphal books), and strongly asserting the primacy of the apostolic chair, not as derived from canons of councils, but as resting upon the declaration *Tu es Petrus, &c.*, is probably altogether spurious, or has been greatly enlarged by more recent additions. It was not quoted before the ninth century. There is, however, no room to doubt that Gelasius rested his claims of spiritual supremacy upon nothing less than Divine right; not content with appealing to the greatness of Rome, the authority of canons, custom and prescription, or even the edict of Valentinian, he affirmed that the supreme government of the whole Church belongs to the bishops of Rome, having been given to them by St. Peter, who had himself received the grant from Christ. It was this pontiff also who first enunciated the principle that the pontifical power is superior to the regal.\*

A. D. 496.  
Anastasius  
II.

Anastasius II., who was elected in 496, pursued a different course from that of his predecessors with regard to the Oriental bishops. In a letter to the emperor Anastasius, he declares his desire to effect an amicable and peaceable settlement of their differences; and, although he maintains the principle which had now become necessary for the Roman patriarchs, that the see of St. Peter retained through him that primacy of rank which had been committed to it by God the Lord, yet he makes his proposal for peace in moderate and conciliating language. He was about to revoke the sentence which had been pronounced against

\* Gelasii Epist. ad Anastasium Imperatorem (Ep. 8, Labbe).

Acacius, on which account some presbyters and others of the clergy renounced their communion with him, when he was suddenly removed by death, A.D. 498.

Two parties again contended concerning the election of a new bishop; again, as before, scenes of violence and bloodshed marked the progress of the conflict; until at length it was agreed that the two rivals, Symmachus and Laurentius, should lay their respective claims before the Visigoth king Theodoric at Ravenna, and should abide by his decision. The king decreed that the party who had been first ordained, and who had the largest number of votes, should be the bishop; and thus the choice was found to have fallen upon Symmachus. A council was immediately convened at Rome, by which it was decreed that in future any member of the clergy who, during the life of a bishop of Rome, should promise his vote, or adopt any measures whatever, with reference to his successor, should be liable to the penalty of deposition and excommunication; that if a bishop should die suddenly without having expressed his wish with reference to the appointment of a successor, then whoever should have at least the majority of the votes of the clergy (no mention of the people, here) in his favour, should be considered lawfully elected; that a reward should be given to any one who should report or prove unfair practices in this matter, and that, if such informer should have been an accomplice, he should receive a pardon. The vanquished party made a new attempt to effect the overthrow of Symmachus in 502. Two senators, Festus and Probrinus, with certain of the clergy, accused him of gross crimes, and sent witnesses to support allegations at the court of Theodoric. Laurentius was brought back to Rome.

A. D. 498.  
Symmachus

and the clergy were divided between him and Symmachus. The two senators sent intelligence of this state of things to the king, and entreated him to appoint a visitor (visitator) for the Romish Church; and Theodoric accordingly appointed Petrus, bishop of Albino, to this office. This act is denounced in the *Liber Pontificalis* as altogether illegal; as if the king, as supreme governor, had not the right to adopt his own measures for the suppression of civil disturbances arising out of ecclesiastical disputes, but must wait for the interposition of a council. Petrus did not act with impartiality; in fact, he violently espoused the cause of Laurentius: but a council which was summoned by Theodoric (the third that met in connexion with this affair) pronounced in favour of Symmachus. By another council, called *Synodus Palmaris*, from the name of the public building in which it met, convened by order of the king in the following year from various parts of Italy, Symmachus was finally established in his dignity. The assembled bishops, called together by the royal authority to pronounce a decision affecting the fortunes of a Roman pontiff, were careful at the same time to uphold the dignity of the apostolic see. They recorded their opinion that the council ought to have been convened by Symmachus himself (meaning, that, in the regular course of things, the order for assembling should have been transmitted to them by Symmachus, although emanating from the king), since to him belonged the chief power in things ecclesiastical, by virtue of the primacy of St. Peter, and the respect which had been shown to him by councils; and that there was no precedent of inferior bishops sitting in judgment on the bishop of Rome. They could venture, however, to undertake this busi-

ness, since Symmachus had voluntarily given his written assent. Symmachus confirmed this assent in the council, and thanked his most gracious sovereign for having convened the assembly. At the same time he requested that the visitor whom the king had appointed at the suggestion of some of his opponents, and in contradiction to the principles of religion and to the ancient laws, should be immediately dismissed by a decree of the council, that everything which had been taken away from himself should be restored, that he should be fully reinstated in his dignity, and that then, but not before, he should answer the charges which had been brought against him. The council, however, could do nothing in this matter without the king's consent; and it was the royal pleasure that Symmachus should clear himself in the first instance. When repairing to the council for that purpose, he was attacked by a furious mob of his enemies, several presbyters who accompanied him were wounded, and his life was in danger; but he was rescued by some of the king's officers. The bishops reported this circumstance to the king, adding that Symmachus, in consenting to defend himself, had acted with great condescension; that the king had a right to do what he pleased; but that Symmachus could not be compelled by the laws of the Church to appear before the council, and that he now refused to do so. They received an answer to the effect that they must adopt the best measures they could for restoring peace to Rome; that the king did not prescribe to them in this matter; but that he respected their ecclesiastical decisions,—for which, however, they were accountable to God. Encouraged by this license, the bishops did not delay (to use their own expression) “to restore

Italy to its ruler, and thus to fulfil the will of God." In order to gain over the opposite party, they sent delegates to the senate, representing that this affair must be left to the judgment of God; that already many acts of irregularity had been committed; that it was not consistent with the honour of the apostolic see, once occupied by St. Peter, that any closer inquiry should be instituted; that, according to the king's command, the senators were not to take upon themselves to examine the divinely-inspired decree of the council, but must simply accept it, as dutiful sons of the Church; especially as the majority of the people were on the side of Symmachus. They decreed that Symmachus was to be regarded as innocent of the crimes laid to his charge, at least before men; that, on account of the existing impediments, the whole matter must be referred to the Divine judgment; that Symmachus should henceforth discharge all the duties of his office; that, by the king's command, they restored to him all his ecclesiastical property in and out of Rome; that every one should return to communion with him; and that the clergy who had renounced that communion, after having made satisfaction to him, should retain their offices.

All these sayings and doings were sufficiently submissive and flattering to the Roman patriarch; but they by no means involve an assertion of the principle that the bishop of Rome cannot be judged by man, but by God only; and, at the same time, the whole history of the council makes it plain, that still, as formerly, both councils and bishops of Rome were under regal jurisdiction.

The opposite party, highly dissatisfied with this decision of the council, were not without reason



when they charged its proceedings with unfairness and partiality. It found a defender in Ennodius, at that time a deacon, afterwards bishop of Pavia, who did not hesitate to maintain that the bishop of Rome was amenable to no civil tribunal: and from an epistle of the Gallican bishop Avitus, of this date, it is clear that the Western bishops were at this time eagerly giving supremacy, and attributing superhuman dignity, to the occupant of the Roman see.

Symmachus was no sooner restored to his dignity and power, than, in the spirit of his more ambitious predecessors, and encouraged by the support and declared principles of the bishops who had reinstated him, he made a bold attempt against the rights and authority of the civil ruler. In a council (A.D. 502) he repealed the enactments of Odoacer, king of Italy, and his minister Basil, concerning the election of a Roman bishop, and the preservation of the property of the Romish see, simply on the ground that laymen had undertaken to meddle with those matters which belonged only to the bishops. In this proceeding, the Roman bishop was perhaps favoured by the circumstances of the times, since Theodoric was probably not unwilling to see the acts of Odoacer, whom he had conquered, set aside. The council afterwards enacted the same laws respecting the inalienability of the property belonging to the see of Rome, but with express mention of the fact that it had been passed with the sanction of Symmachus.

Another council (the sixth) held at Rome under Symmachus, decreed that the work of Ennodius should be preserved, and that its contents should be considered of equal force with synodal decisions. Symmachus consented to the decree, with seeming A. D. 503.

modesty, because it was the will of the bishops. More than two hundred bishops, some of them Oriental, were present at this council, and its acts gave additional influence to the Roman bishop in the West.

A demand had been made, but feebly made, by the predecessor of Symmachus, upon the Churches of the East, for the expunging from their diptychs the name of Acacius, bishop of Constantinople, who had been excommunicated at Rome as a heretic. This demand was firmly maintained by Symmachus, who even refused to hold communion with some Oriental bishops at Rome, because, though not chargeable with heresy themselves, they had retained the name of Acacius as if he had died in communion with the Church. Symmachus also firmly maintained, in opposition to the emperor Anastasius, the position of his predecessor Gelasius, claiming for the pontiff a spiritual sovereignty to which even the emperor was bound to submit.\*

The ancient feuds between the metropolitans of Arles and Vienne having been revived, Symmachus strictly enjoined them to adhere to the regulations of Leo I., thus setting aside the subsequent order of Anastasius, and making Arles again subject to Vienne.† Subsequently, in reply to an application from Cæsarius, bishop of Arles, Symmachus issued an edict in the form of an epistle, containing six canons propounded by his own authority as binding on the Churches of that province in matters of ecclesiastical discipline. This forms only one of many

\* Symm. *Apologetica adversus Anastasii Imperatoris Libellum famosum* (Ep. 6, Labbe).

† Symm. (Ep. 9, Labbe).

instances in which power was put into the hands of the Roman pontiff by foreign Churches themselves.\*

The wealth of the bishop of Rome at this time may be estimated partly by the number of churches, and other valuable donations, for which Rome was indebted to Symmachus, and partly from the fact that he supported daily two hundred and fifty bishops who had been driven into exile by a Vandal king.

Hormisdas, who succeeded Symmachus in 514, entered warmly into the Eutychiean controversy. He endeavoured to bring about an accommodation with the Greeks, by means of his legates whom he despatched to Constantinople; but the negotiation failed, chiefly through his own fault. The emperor, Anastasius, sent word to him, "We will command, but we will not be commanded."—He succeeded better with the next emperor, Justin, who sent many valuable presents to the Church of St. Peter. Theodoric, too, sent costly gifts; "which," says Baronius, "the Church could not receive as offerings, but only as presents, coming as they did from an heretical prince."

A. D. 514.  
Hormisdas.

The government of the next pontiff, John I., was short, but remarkable. About the time of his accession, the emperor, Justin, had published an edict by which he deprived all the Arians in his dominions of their churches; and it has been thought likely that John had promoted this measure by his agents at Constantinople. The oppressed party implored Theodoric, the Arian king who had been so tolerant towards the orthodox party in the West, to intercede in their behalf with the emperor; and Justin,

A. D. 523.  
John I.

\* Symmach. Ep. ad Cæsarium Episcopum Arclatensem (Ep. 5, Labbe).

highly incensed, having threatened to retaliate on the Catholics in Italy, John was compelled to repair to Constantinople for the purpose of endeavouring to procure a revocation of the edict. When John approached Constantinople, the emperor and almost all the inhabitants of the city came out to meet him in so emn procession, carrying wax tapers and crosses; and (according to the *Liber Pontificalis*) the emperor threw himself on the ground before the pope as performing an act of adoration. Hereupon John is said to have entreated him with tears to restore their Churches to the Arians; to which Justin consented,—and then caused John to crown him. Upon the return of the bishops and the other ambassadors, Theodoric threw them all into prison, where John died A.D. 526. The reason of this proceeding is uncertain; but perhaps the splendid reception of the embassy caused Theodoric to fear that they had faithlessly come to a secret understanding with the emperor. Another account says, that Justin did not comply with Theodoric's request. The authority which Baronius quotes\* in support of his assertion that John did not intercede for the restoration of the Arian churches, but rather encouraged the emperor to confirm the Catholics in possession of them, is insufficient to establish the point.

Earnestly as one of the late councils of Rome had denounced the interference of the civil ruler in elections to the see, the necessity and benefit of such supervision now became manifest. After the death of John, two rival parties contended during no less than fifty-eight days concerning the election of a successor; when, at length, Theodoric put an end to the

A. D. 526,  
Felix III.

\* Baron. ad an. 525, n. 8, 19.

dispute by nominating Felix, a worthy man, whom both parties might readily concur in accepting. Baronius says that, according to ancient usage, the clergy elected the Roman pontiff, and that the king afterwards confirmed this election by his assent; an authority which (according to him) was tyrannically assumed by the Arian kings of Italy, and afterwards by the Eastern emperors. And then he endeavours to make it appear that it was a cruel barbarian, a fell tyrant, an impious Arian, who first reduced the Roman Church to such a state of bondage that princes interfered in the election or nomination of the Roman pontiff. This pretence of Baronius, in which he has been followed by many, is refuted by the fact that, from the middle of the fourth century, more than one emperor had a decisive influence in the election of the Roman bishop, and had thus paved the way for the exercise of their right by the Gothic kings. The contested election of Boniface in 418 was confirmed by Honorius; and the same emperor passed a law for the regulation of such cases in future.

The election of a new pontiff in 530 was again attended by conflict and disorder. Two competitors, Boniface and Dioscurus, were elected by different parties on the same day,—a double election which led to great disorders for about a month, when peace was restored by the death of Dioscurus. Boniface, in a council, pronounced sentence of excommunication against him after his death, on account of the bribery which he had practised in obtaining the votes of his adherents. So open and extensive was this practice of bribery that the Roman senate was induced on this occasion to make a distinct enactment against it.

A. D. 530.  
Boniface II.

Soon afterwards, at a council held in St. Peter's

church, Boniface caused the bishops to enter into a written obligation, which they confirmed with an oath before the so-called tomb of St. Peter, that at his death they would unanimously elect Vigilius, a deacon, as his successor. But in another council, attended by the senate, A.D. 531, he confessed that in so doing he had invaded the rights of his prince; probably because the election of a bishop could not be decided on without the knowledge and consent of the Visigoth king. He burnt the bond in the presence of the whole assembly.

The ancient disputes between the patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople were now renewed, on the following occasion. Stephen, metropolitan of Larissa in Thessaly, complained to the bishop of Rome (whom he called *Pater Patrum*, and *Universalis Patriarchus*) that, although the method of his election and consecration had been perfectly canonical, yet certain bishops and presbyters of his province had brought a charge against him before Epiphanius, patriarch of Constantinople, who, notwithstanding his protest to the effect that such causes ought to be referred to Rome, had summoned him to Constantinople, where he expected to receive an adverse sentence, and condemnation to exile. He therefore entreated the assistance of Boniface, on the ground that Illyricum was a province subject to the Roman see. He afterwards represented to Boniface that the patriarch of Constantinople had summoned him to appear before a council at which he presided, and, having heard that he had appealed to the decree of Rome, had become greatly incensed, and had pronounced sentence of deposition against him. Boniface accordingly held a council on this matter at

Rome in 531, at which the bishop of Larissa declared that, while the bishop of Rome, as the chief bishop of Christendom, had the right of receiving appeals from all Churches, he had, in an especial manner, asserted his authority over the Churches of Illyricum ; and in support of the latter position he produced documents from the time of Damasus downwards. From a letter of a successor of Boniface (Agapetus I.) to Justinian, it appears, however, that the bishop of Larissa did not carry his point, but was obliged to cede his bishopric to a certain Achilles.

Boniface died in 532 ; and the choice of his successor occasioned a contest which lasted two months. So extensive was the bribery on this occasion, that the advocate of the Church (*defensor ecclesiæ*) complained at the court of the emperor that some of the clergy even sold the sacred vessels of their churches in order to purchase votes. The choice fell upon John II. ; to whom Athalaric wrote, confirming the decree passed two years before by the senate, on the subject of voting for bishops, and threatening, in addition to ecclesiastical censures, the brand of infamy to those who by the purchase of spiritual offices should commit "the crime of Simon Magus," as he (or rather Cassiodorus) termed it. In the same epistle\* he fixed the sum to be paid for the imperial confirmation of bishops ; commanded John to make this law known to all bishops under his jurisdiction ; and gave instructions to the prefect of Rome to cause it to be set up on a marble slab in the outer court of St. Peter's.

A. D. 533.  
John II.

The circumstances and policy of the emperor Justinian rendered it extremely important that he should

\* In Cassiod. Variis, Lib. 9, Ep. 15.

secure the favour and support of the Roman bishop; and a most remarkable epistle is extant, addressed by this emperor to John II., in which he not only declares that he had endeavoured to unite and subject to him all the Oriental bishops, but also expressly designates the bishop of Rome as “the head of the holy Churches.”

A. D. 535.  
Agapetus.

Agapetus was elected to succeed John, without opposition. Athalaric was now dead, and the new Visigoth king, Theodahat, was attacked by the emperor Justinian. In order to avert hostilities, which he felt himself unequal to repel, the king sent Agapetus and certain senators as ambassadors to Constantinople, threatening that he would put themselves and their families to death if they failed to induce Justinian to withdraw his army from Italy.

A. D. 536.

Agapetus was not able to fulfil the commission with which he had been charged, since the circumstances, and even the disposition, of the king, had changed; but he found other business to transact at Constantinople. Anthimus, formerly bishop of Trapezus, having been lately appointed patriarch of this see, Agapetus refused to hold communion with him, partly because the translation of the bishop was uncanonical, and partly because Anthimus was suspected of heterodoxy. The emperor, however, sided with the patriarch; and this, perhaps, the more decidedly, inasmuch as he had been appointed through the influence of the empress Theodora. Justinian having even threatened to send Agapetus into exile if he did not recognise the patriarch, Agapetus replied, “I, a sinner, had certainly hoped that I should find in Justinian a Christian emperor; instead of which I have found in him a Diocletian.” He insisted especially



upon having an express declaration from Anthimus against the errors of Eutyches. Anthimus, however, declined to give him the satisfaction required; and then Justinian, with high commendation, declared Agapetus to have been in the right. The emperor compelled Anthimus to resign; and, upon his nomination and request, Agapetus consecrated Mennas, one of the orthodox party, patriarch. This transaction is misrepresented by Baronius,\* who speaks of Agapetus as having commanded the emperor, and having deposed one patriarch and nominated another, without having even sought the concurrence of a council. The truth is, as we have seen, that he effected the change only in the same way in which any other influential and zealous bishop might have done so; and as to the new patriarch, it is expressly declared by his contemporary Liberatus that Agapetus consecrated him at the instance of the emperor. It is true that Justinian, in an edict addressed to Mennas,† speaks of the deposition of Anthimus by Agapetus, in consequence of his having thrust himself into the episcopal chair while unwilling to reject the heresies which had been condemned by councils. He does not, however, by any means represent him as having been effectually deposed by the Roman bishop alone; but adds, that he was condemned by a council assembled at Constantinople; and that he, the emperor, since such sentences of deposition had always been confirmed by his predecessors, hereby ratified the sentence of the council against him, and prohibited Anthimus from fixing his residence in any principal town. Agapetus himself explains this, although with the usual pride of

\* Baron. ad an. 536, n. 26, 31.

† Justin. Novell. 42.

a Roman bishop, in a synodal letter to the bishop of Jerusalem, in nearly the same way, where he promises to improve the sad condition of the Church at Constantinople, “with the assistance of the emperor,” —speaks of the appointment of Mennas as having proceeded from the choice of the emperor, and the consent of clergy and people; but at the same time remarks that Mennas, as being the first oriental bishop since the time of St. Peter who had been consecrated by a bishop of Rome, may be compared with those who had been consecrated by the apostle himself.\* Still, it is plain that on this occasion the Roman bishop gained a point; and it may be observed that the disturbances which were occasioned in the East by the Eutychian controversy, during the space of a century, contributed to give weight to the bishops of Rome, who stedfastly adhered to the doctrine of the Council of Chalcedon. It is said that Justinian himself, inclining first to one party and then to the other, while his empress Theodora favoured the Eutychians, sent his confession of faith to Agapetus twice before the latter consented to pronounce him orthodox.†

Agapetus died at Constantinople, and his remains were carried to Rome. He was succeeded by Silverius, a son of Hormisdas. He is said by some to have purchased his election from the king Theodahat, who threatened with death every one who should refuse to vote for him; but Liberatus mentions the election without any allusion to such a circumstance. Baronius does not think it probable that he was guilty, because he charges his rival Vigilus with bribery.‡ It is probable, however, that the party of

A. D. 536.  
Silverius.

\* Acta Concil. Constantinop. (Labbe).

† Agapeti Epist. (Labbe).

‡ Baron. ad an. 536, n. 123.

the latter retorted the charge upon Silverius ; nor is it by any means uncommon for two rivals at the same election to have recourse to the same kind of artifice for securing their return. Soon after his election, Rome fell under the power of Belisarius, the victorious general of Justinian.

Theodora now began to take measures for the restoration of Anthimus. In the first place, she wrote to Silverius, requesting him to come to Constantinople, or, at all events, to restore the deposed bishop. As soon as Silverius read the letter, he said, with a sigh, "I know that this affair will be the occasion of my death ;" but he declared that, in reliance on God and the apostle Peter, he would never recal a man who had been condemned as a heretic. The empress now began to concert measures with Vigilius, a deacon whom Agapetus had left at Constantinople, and who was the bearer of the letter to Silverius. She promised to assist him to obtain the see of Rome, and to pay him a sum of money, on condition that he would annul the decrees of the Council of Chalcedon, and declare Anthimus and his friends orthodox. Vigilius accepted these conditions ; and went to Rome as the bearer of a letter from the emperor to Belisarius, enjoining him to procure the deposition of Silverius on some ground or other, or, at least, to send him to Constantinople, and cause Vigilius to be appointed in his room. Belisarius, having read this letter, said, "I will obey her commands ; but, whoever derives any benefit from the death of Silverius, let him answer for his actions before the Lord Christ !" At the same time, Vigilius promised him a reward in money for his support. Silverius was now accused of being in treacherous communication with the Goths, and was first thrown

into prison, and afterwards sent to Patara, in Lycia. The bishop of Patara, however, made such strong representations to Justinian concerning the innocence of Silverius, that the emperor sent him back to Rome, with orders that he should be restored to his dignity, if it should appear that the communications attributed to him were not genuine. But Vigilius persuaded Belisarius to deliver him into his hands, and shut him up in the island Palmaria, in the Mediterranean, where he was soon starved to death. Silverius was deposed in 537, and died in 538.

A. D. 537  
Vigilius.

Vigilius was elected by the clergy, at the command of Belisarius; and he speedily fulfilled the promise which he had made to the empress. According to another account, however, when the empress called upon him to restore Anthimus, he refused to do so, saying that he had, indeed, made a foolish promise to that effect, but that now, since he was, however unworthy of that office, the vicar of the apostle Peter, he would never restore a heretic, who had been excommunicated by his holy predecessor. The Romans, continues this narrative, accused him to the empress as a violent man, who was guilty of the death of two persons. Hereupon she sent the captain of her body-guard to Rome, with an order to seize Vigilius wherever he might be found, except in St. Peter's. The officer found him in another church, seized him, and put him on board ship. At first, a number of the people accompanied the captive bishop, and implored his blessing, which he gave them. But no sooner was the ship under weigh, than the Romans threw stones, sticks, and brick-bats after him, saying, "Hunger and pestilence be with thee! Thou hast badly used the Romans, and so may it fare with thee whithersoever

thou goest!" Baronius gives a different account of this matter.\* He thinks it, indeed, credible that Vigilius gave a bold refusal to the empress;—accounting for the fact in this way, that as soon as he had been made bishop by lawful election, God gave him grace to be stedfast and faithful:† but, as to his voyage to Constantinople, he represents him as having gone thither in 541 (not before) at the request of the emperor, for the settlement of some theological controversies. Certain it is that this pontiff resided at Constantinople many years, and that his history is chiefly mixed up with the affairs and disputes of the Oriental Churches. Among his epistles, written from that city, we find one in which he nominated the bishop of Arles his vicar in Gaul; but he did not consent to his receiving the pall until he had obtained the approbation of the emperor.

Vigilius died at Syracuse, on his return to Rome; and Pelagius, supported by Justinian, was elected his successor. Pelagius now loudly asserted his orthodoxy; and prevailed upon all the Italian bishops, except those of Venetia and Istria, cheerfully to accept the decrees of the late (fifth general) Council of Constantinople, which they had hitherto refrained from doing, under the persuasion that its explanations of the doctrines of the Council of Chalcedon (*tria capitula*) cast some reflection upon that council. Pelagius called upon Narses to compel the recreants to give in their adhesion. They, however, had the boldness even to excommunicate the general himself; whereupon Pelagius prevailed upon him to seize their leader, the bishop of Aquileia, and also the bishop of Milan, by

A. D. 555  
Pelagius I.

\* Baron. ad an. 546, n. 54.

† Baron. ad an. 540, n. 9. *scj.*

whom the other had been irregularly consecrated, and to send them as prisoners to the emperor.

The kingdom of the Visigoths in Italy had now been completely overthrown by the imperial general (Narses), who ruled at Rome in the name of Justinian. This event gave to the imperial court additional influence in the election of the Roman bishops, and led to certain new regulations in this matter.

A. D. 560.  
John III.

Pelagius died in 560, and was succeeded by John III. The history of his episcopate is not rich in events; but enough transpired to prove that, like many of his predecessors, he made the aggrandisement of his see his primary object. Two Gallican bishops, Sagittarius and Salomius, had been charged with so many crimes, that they were deposed by a council convened at Lyons, in 567, by command of the king Guntchram. The king was, however, personally inclined to show them favour; and upon their request, with a representation that they had been treated unjustly, he permitted them to appeal to the bishop of Rome. Pleased with the deference which they manifested by thus appearing before him as appellants, John gave them an epistle, addressed to the king, desiring their restoration; and the king restored them accordingly, although not without a reprimand. In a short time, however, their excesses were greater than ever; and a new council confirmed their deposition.

A. D. 574.  
Benedict.

Benedict succeeded, in 574, and held the see during four years, in troublesome times, amidst the devastation of Italy by the Lombards, who had invaded the country during the pontificate of his predecessor (A.D. 568). His successor, Pelagius II., was consecrated without waiting for the consent of the emperor. He sought in vain for help against the Lombards from the

A. D. 578.  
Pelagius II.

Frankish king, from Constantinople, and from the exarch of Ravenna; nor was he successful in his endeavours to allay the ecclesiastical disturbances which had lasted ever since the time of Vigilius. The metropolitan of Aquileia and his bishops (not only of a great part of Upper Italy, but also of Rætia and Pannonia) still refused to accept the decrees of the fifth General Council; and those who were under the dominions of the Lombards were still less compliant. On this occasion, Pelagius urged the then novel plea of Roman infallibility; contending that the successors of St. Peter could not err, because Christ had prayed that the faith of the apostle might not fail. This plea, however, was not admitted; and Pelagius then called in the civil force of the exarch of Ravenna, by whom the refractory bishops were thrown into prison. The bishops themselves at length conformed to the opinion of the Roman pontiff; but in this their people refused to follow them.—About the year 587, Pelagius vehemently attacked John of Constantinople, who, like his predecessors, had adopted the title of œcumenical patriarch; and even proceeded to renounce communion with him until he should abandon the title, although it had been formally conferred upon him by a council convened at Constantinople. Pelagius, in this manner, virtually condemned a national council, and attempted to set aside its decrees by his own authority.

We have now arrived at the celebrated pontificate of Gregory I., or, as he is sometimes termed, the Great.

Gregory was born at Rome in the year 540; he was the son of a senator, and reckoned Felix III.

among his ancestors. From early life he was disposed to adopt monastic habits; and after the death of his father he applied the chief part of his property to the founding of six monasteries in Sicily and one at Rome. In 575 he entered his own monastery at Rome; and it is not improbable,—although not so certain as the modern Benedictines labour to make it appear,—that he there introduced the rule of Benedict, which had now been established for about the space of forty years. Pelagius sent him as his ambassador to Constantinople, probably in 579, in order to transact some business with the emperor, and especially, if possible, to procure some assistance against the Lombards. At Constantinople, Gregory obtained great celebrity as a theologian; but he did not succeed in obtaining troops for Italy.

Gregory returned to Rome from Constantinople, after an absence of several years; and it was then, perhaps, that he became the abbot of his monastery. One of his monks, named Justus, when at the point of death, was found to have concealed some money. Indignant at this infraction of monastic discipline, Gregory immediately forbade all the other monks to hold communion with the dying man; and when, in his last moments, he desired to see his brethren, he was told that they all held him in abhorrence. But this was not enough. In order to impress upon the living a horror of his crime, Gregory caused him to be buried in a dunghill; and while his body was thrown into the grave, together with three gold pieces, which had been found in his possession, all the monks were made to cry out, “Thy money perish with thee!” Thirty days afterwards, Gregory was struck with compassion towards the offender on account of the



heavy punishment which had been inflicted on him; and began to devise means of liberating him from his sufferings. He accordingly commanded that the sacrifice should be offered thirty days successively for the deceased; and, on the thirtieth day, Justus is said to have made his appearance, with the joyful declaration that he was delivered from the place in which he had been hitherto tormented.

In November, 589, there happened a terrible overflow of the Tiber, followed by a pestilence, in the course of which Pelagius died. Gregory was unanimously elected his successor; but, professing his unwillingness to be called to this office, he wrote to the emperor Maurice, entreating him not to confirm the election. The emperor, however, confirmed the election, and gave orders for his consecration.

A. D. 590.  
Gregory I.,  
or  
the Great.

The pestilence continued, and Gregory ordered a solemn Litany. This service is minutely described by Gregory of Tours, who tells us how the clergy,—the monks with their abbots, the abbesses and their nuns,—the children,—the laity, the widows, and the married women,—each class accompanied by a presbyter of a certain district,—went forth out of seven churches, and met together, with prayers and psalmody, in one church. During these Litanies, says an old account in Baronius,\* when Gregory was come to the tomb of Adrian, he there saw an angel, who put up a drawn sword into its scabbard, as a sign that the pestilence had ceased; and hence, it is added, this large building, which serves as a fortress to Rome, was called the castle of St. Angelo, and adorned with images of angels.

Gregory was disposed to adopt severe measures

\* Baron. ad an. 590, n. 3.

against the bishops of Venetia and Istria, who still refused to accept the decrees of the fifth General Council. He summoned their metropolitan Severus, bishop of Aquileia, and some others, to appear before a council at Rome; and in support of this summons, he procured an order from the emperor Maurice. The bishops, however, sent a statement of their grievances to the emperor, and declared their determination to adhere to the ancient Catholic communion, entreating him not to suffer violence to be exercised against them. The emperor sent a report of this letter to the Roman bishop, blamed him for having employed military force with a view to overawe these recreant bishops, and *commanded his holiness* not to proceed to acts of severity in the present disturbed state of Italy, but rather to wait for more peaceable times in which to bring the bishops to order. Baronius speaks of this message of the emperor as haughty and tyrannical; but, as for the bold step of Gregory, in employing soldiers to compel his brethren, if possible, to act against the dictates of their conscience, this was, in his opinion, quite right and necessary.\* Gregory made representations to the emperor against his moderate injunctions; but to no purpose.

Soon after his elevation, Gregory addressed to John, bishop of Ravenna, who had blamed him for having declined an office for which he was so well fitted, his *Treatise de Cura Pastoralis*; which obtained an extensive and lasting acceptance. He acquired great reputation as a preacher and expositor of Scripture; and was deservedly renowned for his bounty to the poor.

This pontiff was zealous in his attempts to convert

\* Baron. ad an. 590, n. 28, sq.

the heathen; and in some cases, as in Sardinia and Campania, he recommended the prosecution of this design by the employment of force. He was tolerant towards the Jews, and sought to win them over to Christianity, but chiefly by the unapostolic method of temporal inducements.

Remarkable, especially in the annals of our own country, in his sending of Augustine the monk, with a view to convert the pagan Saxons, who had now become masters of the island. The following is the account of this matter as it stands in Bede.

“ Being moved by divine inspiration . . . he [Gregory] sent the servant of God, Augustine, and with him several other monks, who feared the Lord, to preach the word of God to the English nation. They having, in obedience to the pope’s commands, undertaken that work, were, on their journey, seized with a sudden fear, and began to think of returning home, rather than proceed to a barbarous, fierce, and unbelieving nation, to whose very language they were strangers; and this, they unanimously agreed, was the safest course. In short, they sent back Augustine, whom he had appointed to be consecrated bishop, in case they were received by the English, that he might, by humble entreaty, obtain of the holy Gregory that they should not be compelled to undertake so dangerous, toilsome, and uncertain a journey. The pope, in reply, sent them a hortatory epistle, persuading them to proceed in the work of the divine word, and rely on the assistance of the Almighty. \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Augustine, being strengthened by the confirmation of the blessed father Gregory, returned to the work of the word of God, with the servants of Christ, and

arrived in Britain. The powerful Ethelbert was at that time king of Kent; he had extended his dominions as far as the great river Humber, by which the southern Saxons are divided from the northern. On the east of Kent is the large Isle of Thanet, containing, according to the English way of reckoning, six hundred families, divided from the other land by the river Wantsum, which is about three furlongs over, and fordable only in two places, for both ends of it run into the sea. In this island landed the servant of our Lord, Augustine, and his companions, being, as it is reported, nearly forty men. They had, by order of the blessed pope Gregory, taken interpreters of the nation of the Franks, and sending to Ethelbert, signified that they were come from Rome, and brought a joyful message, which most undoubtedly assured to all that took advantage of it everlasting joys in heaven, and a kingdom that would never end, with the living and true God. The king, having heard this, ordered them to stay in the island where they had landed, and that they should be furnished with all necessaries, till he should consider what to do with them. For he had before heard of the Christian religion, having a Christian wife of the royal family of the Franks, called Bertha; whom he had received from her parents, upon condition that she should be permitted to practise her religion with the bishop Luidhard, who was seat with her to preserve her faith. Some days after, the king came into the island, and, sitting in the open air, ordered Augustine and his companions to be brought into his presence. For he had taken precaution that they should not come to him in any house, lest, according to an ancient superstition, if they practised any magical arts, they might impose

upon him, and so get the better of him. But they came furnished with divine, not with magic virtue, bearing a silver cross for their banner, and the image of our Lord and Saviour painted on a board; and, singing the Litany, they offered up their prayers to the Lord for the eternal salvation both of themselves and of those to whom they were come. When he had sat down, pursuant to the king's command, and preached to him and his attendants there present the word of life, the king answered thus:—'Your words and promises are fair, but as they are new to us, and of uncertain import, I cannot approve of them so far as to forsake that which I have so long followed with the whole English nation. But because you are come from far into my kingdom, and, as I conceive, are desirous to impart to us those things which you believe to be true and most beneficial, we will not molest you, but give you favourable entertainment, and take care to supply you with your necessary sustenance; nor do we forbid you to preach and gain as many as you can to your religion.' Accordingly, he permitted them to reside in the city of Canterbury, which was the metropolis of all his dominions, and, pursuant to his promise, besides allowing them sustenance, did not refuse them liberty to preach. It is reported that, as they drew near to the city, after their manner, with the holy cross, and the image of our sovereign Lord and King, Jesus Christ, they, in concert, sung this Litany:—'We beseech thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thy anger and wrath may be turned away from this city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Hallelujah.' As soon as they entered the dwelling-place assigned them, they began to imitate the course of life practised

in the primitive Church, applying themselves to frequent prayer, watching, and fasting; preaching the word of life to as many as they could; despising all worldly things, as not belonging to them; receiving only their necessary food from those they taught; living themselves in all respects conformably to what they prescribed to others; and being always disposed to suffer any adversity, and even to die, for the truth which they preached. In short, several believed and were baptized, admiring the simplicity of their innocent life, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine.”\*

It hardly needs to be observed in this place, that this mission of Augustine is by no means to be confounded with the first introduction of Christianity into our country; but the following remarks by Dr. Townsend are worthy of attention:—“Christianity had been taught in this island from the commencement of its career. It was weakest in the eastern part of the island, to which Augustine was chiefly directed, but it was fully established in the western parts, where seven bishops presided over the Church in Wales. It had also been preached with great success in the northern parts of the island. . . . The religion of the people who were reduced to slavery under the Saxons was still Christian. Christianity was still tolerated on condition of the payment of an annual tribute; and only ten years before the arrival of Augustine, Theonas, bishop of London, and Thadioc, archbishop of York, in the year 588, had retired to the western side of Britain. It is not improbable that they intended to return; for though many, yet not all their clergy, had retired with them.

\* Beda, *Eccl. Hist.* vol. ii. b. 1, c. 23, 25, 26, ed. Giles.

Even at the moment of the landing of Augustine Christianity was not a strange religion in the kingdom of Kent. The queen Bertha was a Christian. A bishop resided in the palace. She worshipped in the church of St. Martin, in Canterbury; and there can be little doubt that, if Augustine had never landed in England, the more primitive Asiatic form of keeping Easter, with the general truths of Christianity, would have speedily prevailed. The greater unanimity which would have resulted to the British Christians from the non-arrival of Augustine with the novelties of Roman worship would probably have more speedily effected the conversion of the Saxon pagans.”\*

Gregory was strict and even severe in his enforcement of ecclesiastical discipline with regard to all bishops within his jurisdiction, that is to say, all whom he could make to feel the weight of his authority. But it must be acknowledged that he submitted himself to the rules of conduct which he prescribed to others, and that the strict enforcement of discipline had become highly necessary amidst the disorders and excesses of which so many bishops were now guilty. But this enforcement of discipline seems to have been directed very generally with a view to maintain the dignity and influence of the Roman see. Hadrian, bishop of Thebæ in Thessaly, having received an unfavourable sentence from his metropolitan, the bishop of Larissa, and afterwards from the primate, the bishop of Justiniana Prima, appealed to Gregory. Gregory acquitted him; and, “in virtue of the authority of the prince of the apostles, Peter,” declared the primate excluded from communion for the space of thirty days, during which he should

\* Townsend, Eccl. and Civil Hist. book 3, ch. 1.

perform penances, while from the metropolitan he withdrew all authority over Hadrian, who should for the future be under his own immediate jurisdiction: if either bishop refused compliance with this order, he should then be excommunicated for life. Properly, *i. e.*, according to the law of Justinian, the decision of the primate, as bishop of Justiniana Prima, ought to have been final; or, at all events, if carried from him, the matter ought to have been referred to a General Council. But that bishop had already been obliged to bend beneath the power of Rome.

It was with greater difficulty that Gregory carried his point in an affair which took place in Western Illyricum. Natalis, metropolitan bishop of Salona, in Dalmatia, had made his archdeacon Honoratus a presbyter, under pretence of promoting him to a higher degree in the Church, but, in fact, in order that he might deprive him of an important office which no presbyter could hold,—and this, again, for the sake of being revenged on him for refusing to deliver up the sacred vessels of the Church to the bishop, Honoratus having been afraid that he was about to make away with them, in order to gratify his extravagant habits while indulging too freely in the luxuries of the table. Gregory commanded the bishop, under a heavy penalty, to restore Honoratus to his place. Natalis obeyed this command, but died soon after. Gregory then sent a message to the bishops of Dalmatia, in the name of St. Peter, requiring them not to consecrate another metropolitan without his consent, and upbraiding them with being so involved in worldly affairs as to be forgetful of their duties; at the same time he recommended Honoratus, and expressly excluded a vicious presbyter



named Maximus. The bishops, however, elected and consecrated Maximus; either not having received Gregory's letter, or because Maximus had obtained an imperial order in his favour. It is said that he was escorted to the church by a body of soldiers, who killed several of the clergy. Gregory therefore sent word to him that, until he should be certified that he had been elected by virtue of the emperor's warrant (which he could not believe to have been the case), himself and the other bishops who consecrated him must be suspended from the exercise of all their functions, under the penalty of the curse of God and of the apostle Peter. Maximus tore the letter of Gregory in pieces, and laid a complaint against him before the emperor, to the effect that he had put to death in prison a certain bishop named Malchus, who was his debtor. Gregory then wrote to his delegate at Constantinople, desiring him to represent to the emperor and his son, that if he, "their servant," had put a Lombard to death, that nation was at present without a king or other ruler, and in extreme confusion; but that he feared God, and would not be partaker in the death of any man; and that Malchus had died suddenly, without being put into prison. Gregory declared that he would rather die than that the Church of the apostle Peter should suffer any indignity. Maximus, however, continued to retain his office; and the emperor, who was at that time dissatisfied with the Roman patriarch on account of his refusing the title of "œcumenical" to the bishop of Constantinople, commanded him to recognise Maximus, and to receive him well if he should present himself before him. Gregory hereupon complained to the empress, but, in obedience to the emperor's

command, he said he would overlook the fact that Maximus had been consecrated without his knowledge and consent, while yet he could not tolerate his misconduct, nor the audacity with which he had continued to celebrate divine worship when he was under sentence of excommunication. He therefore warned the clergy and Churches of Dalmatia not to hold communion with Maximus or the bishops who adhered to him. This took effect; and at length Maximus himself was humbled. He repaired to Ravenna, where the imperial exarch assisted him in making his peace with Gregory, upon submission. By an oath taken before the remains of St. Apollinaris he cleared himself of the charge of simony and other crimes which had been alleged against him, after having prostrated himself in the midst of the city, and exclaiming, "I have sinned against God and the most holy father Gregory," in which posture he is said to have remained three hours. Gregory then told him that he forgave him for his ingratitude towards himself, and was ready to send him the pall: and at the same time announced that he himself had brought the governor of Dalmatia (who had supported Maximus) to a sense of his error and to the performance of penance.

This pontiff resolutely set himself against the very prevalent malpractice of the sale and purchase of ecclesiastical benefices,\* which he denominated (as others had done before him) the heresy of Simon, or simony. This practice seems to have been countenanced by the Frankish kings of that time: and accordingly Gregory wrote to Childebert and the queen Brunehild, urging them to put an end to such

\* Greg. M. Epp.

disgraceful traffic, and to the bad custom of exalting laymen suddenly to the rank of bishops. We find also many other of his epistles addressed to bishops against simony. He expressed his wish that the clergy should not demand fees for consecrations, marriages, baptisms, or a place of burial; but he consented to their receiving voluntary offerings for their services. He encouraged clerical celibacy, but inveighed against the abuses to which it led;—abuses which were now fearfully on the increase.

Gregory was a zealous promoter of ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies; and his numerous writings in commendation and extension of religious symbolism tended greatly to enhance the esteem and to promote the practice of pompous and glittering rites of worship. He did not, however, force these observances upon men's consciences, nor did he enjoin them by the authority of St. Peter. In sending Augustine to convert the Anglo-Saxons, he expressly instructed him to adopt such existing customs and practices as he might find to be religious and edifying. And on another occasion he declared that the Roman Church was not to be the only pattern of religious ceremonies. The chief of his liturgical works is his "Sacramentary" (*Liber Sacramentorum*), which begins with the celebrated canon of the mass (*canon missæ*). The works of his predecessors ("Sacramentary of Leo the First," "Sacramentary of Gelasius") probably lay at the foundation of the whole; and it is difficult to say how much of the book itself, or how much of its arrangement, must be attributed to Gregory himself. As usually edited, the "Sacramentary" contains many things which must have been of a later date than Gregory. A book of chants is also attributed to Gre-

gory; but the collection which now bears his name is undoubtedly more recent.

In the works of Gregory we find the first trace of the doctrine of purgatory, properly so called.

Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, finding that some of the people offered adoration to the images which were set up in the churches, caused them to be broken in pieces and cast away. Gregory praised his zeal in not suffering anything made with hands to be worshipped; but blamed him for destroying the images. They were useful (he said) for the instruction and edification of the unlearned and the heathen, for which purpose the ancients had caused them to be set up in the churches. It is impossible, however, to acquit Gregory himself of the charge of personal superstition, either real or pretended. Many were the so-called fragments of the chains of St. Peter which he sent as precious and beneficial presents to different parties; and when the empress Constantina applied to him for St. Peter's head, his reply was couched in terms which at least implied an extraordinary degree of reverence for the pretended relic.

In the year 595 Gregory saved Rome from pillage by the Lombards, by inducing their king Agilulf to accept a sum of money; and afterwards (in 599) he succeeded in concluding a peace with him. Hostilities again commenced through the infraction of the treaty by Callinicus, the exarch of Ravenna; but another treaty was concluded in 604. In all these events the measures which Gregory recommended were more agreeable to the necessities of the state than was the insane and weak resistance of the imperial exarch. The emperor Maurice disapproved of Gregory's long and violent contest with the patriarch

of Constantinople respecting the title of œcumenical bishop: he took bishops under his protection whom Gregory persecuted; and issued edicts which were very unpalatable to him. This prince, who was one of the most illustrious that sat upon the throne of the Greek empire, lost his crown by an insurrection of the army, which raised to the imperial dignity Phocas, who soon caused Maurice to be put to death. Phocas was a monster of vice; but Gregory announced his devotion to him upon his election in an epistle, beginning with the words, "Glory to God in the highest, who, as it is written, changes times and overthrows kingdoms;" and when Phocas had expressed his astonishment at finding no ambassador of the Roman bishop at the Byzantine court, Gregory replied that none of his bishops were willing to undertake such an office during the preceding bad reign, but that now he hastened to send one.

A. D. 602.  
Phocas,  
emp.

Gregory died in 604, and was buried in St. Peter's church.

A. D. 604

Having arrived at this memorable epoch in the history of the papacy, it is now time to look back, and to consider the steps by which ecclesiastical power had been consolidated and concentrated in the hands of the bishops of Rome since the period of Constantine. In reviewing the course of events, we have already taken notice of many indications, and many of the causes, of this phenomenon; but, although we may sometimes again travel over the same ground, it is expedient to take a more systematic and comprehensive view of the way in which that great social change which

we are contemplating was thus far effected. It is a matter of considerable importance to trace the growth of ecclesiastical power in the hands of the clergy; and more particularly to observe how it became lodged in the hands of the bishops, especially the bishops of Rome.

By the successors of Constantine it was made a law that no other religion than Christianity should be tolerated; and after the lapse of a century it actually came to pass that all who were not Christians were proscribed by the laws, and declared to have forfeited all their civil privileges. The persecuting enactments of Justinian especially were exceedingly comprehensive and stringent.

The tendency of this order of things, although, perhaps, unperceived by the bishops, was that the head of the State must necessarily become the head of the Church. According to the old Roman constitution, everything relating to religion was placed under the jurisdiction of the College of Augurs. This college, however, was not properly a religious body; it was a department of the State. It consisted, not of priests, but of the heads of the senate; and so jealous was the civil power of the exercise of its functions, that scarcely ever were any other than members of the ruling families admitted into this body. When at length the family of the Cæsars became supreme, this branch of administration was not overlooked, but they took it almost entirely into their own hands. Augustus was president of the College of Augurs, in which he reserved to himself the office of *pontifex maximus*: and this office was not only retained by all succeeding emperors down to Constantine, but even Constantine himself kept the title after he declared himself in favour of

Christianity; as also did all his successors down to Gratian.

The Christian emperors soon began to claim that exercise of authority which was inconsistent with the established rights of the Church as a body, and by which those rights were oppressively circumscribed. There were especially three rights of sovereignty, which the emperors began to exercise *de facto* as early as the fourth century, and which they never afterwards consented entirely to abandon. In the first place, even Constantine and his immediate successors interfered with the election of Church officers, and especially of bishops. As early as the middle of the fourth century the bishops of the larger sees were almost always elected under the influence of the Court;\* and in some cases they were directly nominated by the emperor. Subsequently a sum of money was paid to the emperor for such nomination,—a practice which appears to have become common in the sixth century.† Besides this, at an equally early period the Christian emperors claimed the right of confirming all ecclesiastical laws and ordinances, and practically established the principle that no ecclesiastical law, certainly no decree of a General Council, could be held valid without the imperial sanction. Even the Creed of Nicaea received the sanction of Constantine,‡ and was published under the authority of his name. Not only did General Councils meet under the control of an imperial commissioner, but all the acts of these councils were subject to the confirmation of the emperor, and could not be regularly published until they had received his sanction. Yet, further, the emperors often

\* Sozom. H. E. 6, 7.

† See Evagr. H. E. lib. 5, c. 5.

‡ Socrates, H. E. 1, 6, 9.

even gave laws to the Church, directing their rescripts to the bishops, and commanding that they should be read in the churches; and this, too, not only concerning matters of external order and polity, but with reference to faith and doctrine.\* Imperial edicts were issued for the settlement of ecclesiastical controversies, and for the regulation of Church doctrines; and emperors undertook to proscribe or sanction theological formulas and opinions by their own authority. For the most part, indeed, these matters were left to the bishops; but cases are of no rare occurrence in which religious questions were settled by an order in council, or imperial ordonnance. Such were the Henoticon of the emperor Zeno, the Typus of Constans, and various Rescripts of Justinian the elder.

It should be observed that the emperors were not unfrequently invited to interpose their authority in ecclesiastical matters by the Churches themselves, or by their representatives the bishops. A bishop, for example, desiring to carry some point, or to establish some observance, to which he foresaw that opposition would be made, repaired to court, and besought the emperor to settle the matter by an edict; or, desiring to obtain general acceptance for some doctrine, which certain parties would be ready to contest, in order to obtain his end, he would make a party at court, and gain over the emperor, so as to dictate to a council its decision on the disputed point, or to declare the contested opinion orthodox by an imperial edict, at the same time denouncing as heretics all who should gainsay it. Still more frequently, a presbyter desired

\* Baronius, *ad an.* 370, n. 123, ignores such cases; but we find them in Theodoret, 1, 26, 27, and in the Acts of the Council of Ephesus, *ad fin.*



to be made a bishop, or a bishop sought translation from a small and poor Church to a larger and richer one; and, finding that this could not be effected in a regular way, the parties would repair to Court, and obtain either a positive injunction in their favour, or at least a recommendation which had all the force of a command, by virtue of which, without further trouble, they were nominated to the desired posts. Cases of this kind were very frequent during the fourth and fifth centuries. Sometimes whole councils besought the emperor to nominate a certain party to a vacant bishopric;\* and we find also that councils petitioned the emperors to interpose the exercise of their authority against those who refused obedience to their own decrees.†

It could hardly be expected that the princes who were thus often challenged to exercise their prerogative in regulating Church affairs, would not sometimes also exercise it in accordance with their own views, for their own convenience, or even at the instigation of their own caprice.

During the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, the Church in general had little idea of asserting its own independence of the temporal power. At Rome, however, before the expiration of this period, such an idea was entertained, as we may learn from the epistle of Hormisdas to the Orientals in the year 518. But the universal Church did make several indirect attempts, during this period, to resist the encroachments of the civil power. Thus the Council of Antioch (341) decreed that if a presbyter or deacon deposed by his bishop, or a bishop deposed by a provincial council, should appeal for a reversal of the

\* Theodoret, H. E. 4, 6.

† Conc. Antioch. c. 5.

sentence directly to the emperor, instead of referring his case regularly to a higher ecclesiastical tribunal, he should lose his office for ever. Sometimes bishops employed all the powers of their oratory to hinder the bringing of ecclesiastical affairs before a civil magistrate. And when the emperor Maximus caused the heretic Priscillian to be put to death, many bishops felt that the civil governor had thus assumed a power which did not belong to him.\*

Towards the end of the fifth century, the Roman bishops, Simplicius and Pelagius, plainly declared to the emperors Zeno and Anastasius, that it was not for them to prescribe anything to the Church, but that they ought to obey when the Church prescribed.† On the other hand, not only was the most arbitrary interference of the emperors in Church matters very often allowed to pass without protest, but the right of such interference was distinctly recognised. The Roman bishop Liberius did not venture to contradict the emperor Constantius, when he told him that he was bound to submit to his decision.‡ No exception was made to the religious edicts of Justinian on the ground of incompetent authority.§ And Gregory the Great, even when remonstrating with the emperor Maurice concerning some of his proceedings with regard to Church affairs, yet expressly said that he found himself bound to obey the emperor.||

Immediately upon the establishment of Christianity

\* Baron. ad an. 386, n. 23—25.

† Ibid. 476, n. 9 ; 494, n. 2.

‡ Theodoret. H. E. lib. 2, c. 16.

§ Only Agapetus told him that he received his edict "non quia laicis auctoritatem prædicationis admittimus," but because he approved of the edict itself. (Ep. 6.)

|| Greg. M. Epp. lib. 3, ep. 65.

as the religion of the empire under Constantine, the Church had the legal right of possessing property, and a large amount of wealth began to flow into the hands of the clergy. The emperors themselves seemed to take pleasure in diverting considerable treasure into this channel. Constantine assigned a portion of the revenue of the State to the use of the Churches, causing a certain amount to be paid to them out of the fiscus in every province, and directing that these resources should be applied especially to the payment of the clergy.\* Julian withdrew this grant;† and it was restored by his Christian successor only to the extent of two-thirds,‡ a reduction which appears to have been effected without any complaint on the part of the Church,—whence we may infer that the original grant must have been very large.

Constantine contributed still more extensively to the wealth of the Church by his celebrated edict of the year 321, declaring the ecclesiastical body competent to receive legacies, and to possess property of all kinds.§ Thus the Church was in a position not only to receive yearly revenues, arising from voluntary offerings or customary payments, but to possess fixed property yielding a certain income, altogether independent of the existing inclinations or desires of the laity. Scarcely had ten years elapsed after the issuing of this edict, before it became an universal custom for every one at his death to bequeath some property to the uses of the Church; and within fifty years the clergy of every province had become pos-

\* Euseb. H. E. 10, 6; Theodoret H. E. 1, 11.

† Sozomen, H. E. 5, 5.

‡ Cod. Justin. lib. 1, tit. 2, l. 12; Theodoret, H. E. 4, 4.

§ Cod. Theod. lib. 16, tit. 2, l. 4; Euseb. H. E. 10, 6; Sozomen, H. E. 1, 8; 5, 5.

sessed of no less than a tenth of all landed property. At the end of the fourth century, the emperors Valentinian and Gratian found it needful to publish an edict\* with a view to rescue the property of widows and orphans from the grasp of the clergy, who had now assumed a right to administer the property of all persons who died intestate; and even Jerome was obliged to say that he was sorry, not that the emperors had made this law, but that the conduct of his brethren had rendered it necessary.†

There was yet another way in which the emperors contributed to promote the accumulation of ecclesiastical wealth. As soon as Christianity was established as the religion of the empire, a large portion of the property which had formerly belonged to the heathen temples was made over to the Church. It is probable that a considerable portion of this property was confiscated to the treasury, and that some was appropriated to private individuals; but it is also clear that no inconsiderable amount was made over to ecclesiastical uses. The Church of Alexandria was enriched by Constantine with the property and treasures of the temple of the Sun belonging to that place;‡ and according to another writer,§ the revenues of the same Church were augmented by the property of the splendid temple of Serapis, under Theodosius the Great. By a law of Honorius, the Church became possessed of all property which had belonged to communities denounced as heretical.||

\* Valentinian I., lib. 20, de Episc. Conf. Ammian. Marcell. lib. 27, c. 3.

† Ep. 2, ad Nepotian. See also ib. Ep. 22, ad Eustochium.

‡ Sozomen, H. E. 5, 7.

§ Socrates, H. E. 5, 16.

|| Cod. Theod. lib. 16, tit. 5, l. 43, 52, 57; Socrat. H. E. 7, 7.

Under Constantine and his successors the clergy enjoyed valuable privileges and immunities. In their own persons they were exempt from liability to certain public services, which were exacted from other citizens in their turn by virtue of the possession of property or residence in a certain locality; and at the same time the property of the Church was free from certain burdens and imposts, more or less weighty, although not exempt from payment of the ordinary tribute to the empire. The canon law, indeed, claims these immunities as founded in divine right; but it is clear from ecclesiastical history that they were accorded as a matter of imperial favour.

A still further immunity or privilege conceded to ecclesiastical persons was their exemption, to a certain extent, from the jurisdiction of the civil magistrate (*privilegium fori*). As early as the third century it had become a law of the Church, founded on a still more ancient practice, that civil processes between ecclesiastical persons should be conducted only before an ecclesiastical tribunal. By the first Christian emperors this was established as a law of the empire, in the form of a real exemption. It is probable that some such exemption was accorded even by Constantine; and it was fully established by Marcian, who confirmed the acts of the Council of Chalcedon, which declared the penalty of deposition (can. 9) against any of the clergy who should cite a brother ecclesiastic before a secular tribunal. In suits between clergy and laity,—that is, when one party only was an ecclesiastic,—no such exemption was obtained until the sixth century, when it was enacted by Justinian. Until then it had been the custom for the clergy to follow the laity to the civil tribunal; but by the edict

of Justinian, the laity were allowed to sue ecclesiastics and monks only in an ecclesiastical court, with a provision that an appeal should lie from the bishop to the supreme civil tribunal. The laity, therefore, could sue spiritual persons in no other than a spiritual court in the first instance; but they had it in their power afterwards to transfer the suit to the hearing of the civil magistrate. It was also a privilege of the clergy that none but an ecclesiastical tribunal was competent to punish them for ecclesiastical offences, or breaches of Church order or discipline. But it must not be supposed that they were exempt from the jurisdiction of the civil courts in criminal matters generally, or with reference to offences committed against the laws of the state or social order.

It is evident that the *privilegium fori* which was thus far established involved not only exemption or immunity, but also a certain transfer of judicial authority from the civil magistrate to the ecclesiastical tribunal. Nor was the authority of these spiritual courts confined merely to cases of exemption, or to the affairs of ecclesiastical persons; other matters were referred to these courts, and the jurisdiction thus obtained by the Church became one very important element of its influence and power. Besides the cognizance of civil suits and ecclesiastical offences relating to the clergy, or in which ecclesiastics were more or less concerned, the state conceded a judicial authority to the rulers of the Church in the following cases:—

First. Spiritual courts were authorised to decide civil suits, of all kinds, between laymen, without liberty of appeal, whenever the litigant parties agreed to submit their cases to them in preference to the civil

tribunals; that is to say, with reference to such suits, laymen were permitted to choose their court, whether civil or ecclesiastical. This state of law was evidently founded upon the ancient practice of the Church, by which disputes between Christians were referred to arbitration within the borders of their own community, instead of their going to law before a heathen magistrate; the umpires in such cases being the presbyters or bishops. Even Constantine enacted a law by which all litigant parties were permitted to carry their causes before the bishops in preference to the civil courts; while, at the same time, the superior magistrates of provinces and their officials were charged to give effect to the sentences of these spiritual judges without hesitation or delay.\* In the years 398 and 408 these *judicia episcopalia* were still further confirmed by Arcadius and Honorius, and it was expressly declared that no appeal should lie from the decision of the spiritual courts.† The jurisdiction thus accorded was strictly speaking no more than the power of arbitration—but arbitration without appeal—in the case of consentient parties, such as had long since been known to Roman law; it was *jurisdictio sine imperio*, the civil magistrate alone being competent to exercise authority or force in the execution of a sentence when required. Such jurisdiction, however, was a great means of influence and power in the hands of the clergy. In large dioceses, the amount of business thus brought before the bishops became exceedingly burdensome; and hence they often withdrew from the personal transaction of these affairs, and appointed presbyters or deacons as their substi-

\* Sozomen, H. E. 1, 9. (The law in Cod. Theod. tit. 6, 8, p. 339, is spurious.)

† Cod. Justin., lib. 1, tit. 4, l. 7, 8.

tutes. In some cases these inferior ecclesiastics abused their judicial power, or made it a matter of traffic; and we read that, on this account, Sylvanus, bishop of Troas, chose his officials from the laity instead of the clergy.\* It should be added that, even from the time of Constantine, the manumission of slaves was intrusted to the clergy in common with the civil magistrate; and we find that the ecclesiastical judge had often the advantage of affording special facilities for the transaction of this business.†

Secondly. The Church possessed also the right of exercising a criminal jurisdiction, of a formidable and extensive kind. In the earliest times, the Church inflicted ecclesiastical censures, and enjoined penances, upon those members of its body who were guilty of open and scandalous crimes. This power, originally vested in the whole body, fell by degrees into the hands of the bishops; who were legally invested, under the Christian emperors, with the power of inflicting severe chastisements on the crimes, or the immoral conduct, of laymen,—such offences being regarded, under a religious point of view, as sins, or offences against God. All members of the Church, that is to say, when Christianity was fully established as the religion of the empire, all persons, were subject to this jurisdiction; and not only were ecclesiastical courts armed with power to punish notorious offences, but they were permitted also to institute inquiries, to cite suspected parties, and make examination for the discovery of faults privately committed. At the beginning of the fifth century, an officer (*penitentarius*)

\* Socrates, H. E. 7, 37.

† Cod. Theod. lib. 4, tit. 7, l. 1; Sozom. H. E. 1, 9; Cod. Justin. lib. 1, tit. 13.



was appointed to receive voluntary confessions concerning *peccata occulta*; but no long time had elapsed before the bishops were authorised to inquire, *ex officio*, concerning the commission of such sins: in their courts informations were lodged, parties accused compelled to plead, and sentences pronounced, which gradually lost their spiritual character, and became more and more like those which proceeded from the civil magistrate. This weighty jurisdiction,—which the Church claimed the right of exercising over all members of the State, not excepting even its highest personages, and which it long continued to exercise, without having its authority resisted or called in question,—could not but throw large power into the hands of the Church rulers. In point of fact, to this source we may trace a considerable proportion of the overwhelming influence which they possessed during the course of a thousand years.

Thirdly. It was an ancient and reasonable practice that to Church rulers alone should be referred the decision of purely ecclesiastical causes, or those affecting only matters of religion or faith; and the right of adjudicating in such matters was declared to appertain to ecclesiastical persons by Constantine, Theodosius, and other Christian emperors. Gradually these causes ecclesiasticæ increased in number and importance, new cases being from time to time reserved to the decision of the Church by special laws and edicts, or being claimed by the Church itself as appertaining to its peculiar jurisdiction. Of these the principal were matrimonial and testamentary causes.—The origin of the claim on the part of the Church to interfere, or even to exercise sole jurisdiction, in matrimonial causes, is obviously and easily understood. There

can be no doubt that, in the best and purest ages of the Church, its members were prompted by a simple and earnest piety to implore the Divine blessing on the nuptial contract, and that they could not be satisfied unless the marriages of Christian people partook of a solemn and religious character. By degrees, marriage ceased to be regarded as being, in any measure, a civil contract; it came to be regarded first as a purely religious or ecclesiastical transaction, and eventually as partaking of the nature of a sacrament. But sacraments are pre-eminently spiritual; and hence matrimony, with all its adjuncts, including everything relating to the matrimonial contract, divorces, and the like, were readily classed under the category of spiritual causes, or matters belonging to the purely ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the bishops' courts.

More obscure is the origin of ecclesiastical power with reference to wills and testaments. It has been supposed that it became a custom with Christians to deposit their wills, for safety, in their churches, as such documents had been formerly deposited with the same view in heathen temples; and that the clergy, from having kept guard over the instruments, came to exercise authority with reference to the fulfilment of their provisions, or to decide in controversies concerning their validity or meaning. This is, indeed, mere conjecture; but it is certain that, as early as the sixth century, special privileges and powers were given to the Church and the bishops in relation to testamentary affairs. At first indeed this power was but limited; but the way was paved for the attainment of still greater power, under favourable circumstances.

The clergy were now universally regarded as the representatives of the Church, the lawful managers of its property, and the guardians of its rights; and as such they formed a highly privileged, powerful, and wealthy class of citizens. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that their numbers rapidly increased; in fact, before the expiration of the fifth century their numbers had become prodigious, notwithstanding that, for some time past, repeated attempts had been made by the emperors to restrain them within more moderate limits. The third Novell of Justinian (A.D. 535), sets forth in strong terms the evils which had arisen from the enormous multiplication of clergy in Constantinople; and in prescribing remedial measures, it reduces the clerical establishment of the great church of that city (with its three affiliated churches) to sixty presbyters, one hundred deacons, forty deaconesses, ninety subdeacons, one hundred and ten readers, twenty-five choristers, being four hundred and twenty-five in all; to which should be attached one hundred doorkeepers (beadles, &c.).

Although no new orders of clergy were created, a great variety of offices and titles of distinction were instituted, having become more or less necessary for the administration of ecclesiastical property, the exercise of jurisdiction, or the maintenance of order. Such were archpresbyters, archdeacons, chancellors, notaries, bishops' chaplains, stewards, defensors, and other inferior officers.

The distinction between clergy and laity became more strongly marked. Tokens of respect from the laity towards the clergy were not only customarily shown, but even positively required by ecclesiastical law; and Martin of Tours could affirm without contradiction

that an emperor was far inferior to a presbyter.\* The Council of Maçon (A.D. 585)† enacted that whenever one of the laity met one of the superior clergy in the public streets he should make a lowly and reverent bow; if both parties were on horseback, then the layman should take off his hat; but if the layman was on horseback, and the clergyman on foot, the layman was to dismount and make his obeisance.

A distinctive clerical habit came to be universally adopted during the period under review. This does not seem to have taken place during the first three centuries. In the fourth century, a peculiar clerical costume, apart from the vestments worn during the performance of Divine service, was still unknown; but many councils had enjoined the clergy to wear a dress befitting their sacred character, even when not employed in the celebration of Divine worship, without laying down any regulations as to the pattern or colour of their clothing. Towards the end of the fourth century, it had become customary for the clergy, especially the bishops, to dress in black;‡ but it appears that this custom was not at that time universal.§ It is probable that a special clerical habit was universally adopted before the end of the fifth century; for in the sixth century we find several ecclesiastical canons by which the clergy were restricted to the use of their peculiar dress under certain penalties; and for a violation of this rule the Council of Maçon (A.D. 581) ordained that the clerical delinquent should suffer one month's confinement, with a diet of bread and water.||

\* Sulpit. Sever. Vit. Martini, c. 20; Dial. 2, c. 6.

† Conc. Matic. A. D. 585, c. 15.

‡ Socrates, H. E. 6, 20.

§ Hieron. Ep. 2, ad Nepotian.; Cælest. Ep. ad Episc. Viennens. et Narbonens. Provinc.

|| Conc. Matic. A. D. 581, c. 5.

The liturgical vestments of the several orders of the clergy had long since been formally established with great minuteness of distinction.\*

The precise date of the introduction of the clerical tonsure is uncertain. In the fourth century it had become customary to cut the hair close, and perhaps in a certain shape, upon admission to the lowest order of the clergy, as a mark of distinction from the laity; and this was called *tonsuræ*. The term *corona*, denoting the precise form into which the hair was cut, arose in the course of the sixth century; and although perhaps this form was not yet everywhere the same, it had now become an established maxim *quod tonsuræ faciât clericum*.

The clergy were now also advantageously distinguished from the laity by the different system of discipline to which they were subject. No clerical person could, for any offence whatever, be excommunicated, and thus reduced to the necessity of performing public penance; a circumstance which would have been felt as involving something like a degradation of the whole ecclesiastical order: at the worst, he could be but ejected from the body of the clergy, and reduced to the rank of a layman, with or without the privilege of communion. By this means clerical punishments were less public and notorious than they would otherwise have been; and it tended to exalt clerical dignity that ecclesiastics were taught to regard exclusion from their body as the worst evil which they could be made to suffer. In practice there were some exceptions to this rule,—a rule which Leo the Great declared to be founded on an undoubted apostolical tradition;† but these exceptions were extremely rare.

\* Thomassini, p. 1. lib. 2, c. 45.

† Ep. ad Rustic. Narbonens. c. 2.

During this period the practice of clerical celibacy gained considerable ground, and materially contributed to the growth of ecclesiastical independence and power. It is clear that, during the first three centuries, this practice, although not unknown, had not yet grown into an established or general custom, much less was it enforced by any legal enactment. Even at the Council of Nicæa, A.D. 325, the attempt made to establish it by law was frustrated. But, under the teaching of the monks, who had by this time gained considerable influence over the public mind, the opinion rapidly gained ground that chastity or celibacy constituted the highest degree of human virtue and perfection; whence it was easily inferred that marriage was inconsistent with the dignity and purity of the sacerdotal order. Compulsory celibacy was indeed resisted by the clergy, as an oppressive innovation; and this too with such a measure of success that, during the whole period now under review (300–600), the custom was not legally established as of universal and indispensable obligation. Some individual bishops, indeed, exerted their utmost influence to make the observance universal throughout their dioceses; various Oriental councils enforced it by law; and other efforts were made from time to time in the same direction: but no General Council yet undertook to bind upon all the clergy a practice against which so many of them continued to protest. In the Western Church it was indeed a law that no one belonging to either of the three higher orders of clergy should live in the state of matrimony; but the law was extensively disobeyed, and there appeared to be no power sufficient to enforce it. From all this it is evident that the introduction of celibacy, while undoubtedly of later date

than the origin of Christianity, is not to be regarded as an invention of the clergy with a view to increase or consolidate their power; the real and long-continued resistance which many of them made to the practice, may at least exonerate them, as a body, from such an imputation. But yet it can hardly be doubted that the most politic and discerning members of the clerical body, and especially the heads of the Church, must have foreseen that the establishment of this institute would eventually tend to the exaltation of their order, by acting as a wall of separation between the clergy and the laity, by more firmly cementing the various members of the isolated body, by giving to each individual member an increased and undivided interest in the whole, and by contributing to the independence of the clergy with regard to the State.

The separation of the clergy from the laity was made more complete than formerly by additional injunctions\* laid upon the clergy, prohibiting them from engaging in certain (so called) secular occupations and pursuits, and from mixing themselves up with certain pecuniary and family affairs of laymen. Such separation of interests had already begun to be established during the third and fourth centuries; as appears from various passages in the apostolical canons.†

No less remarkable, and in some respects still more important, are the changes which took place during this period in the internal social organisation, in the domestic constitution, polity, and government of the clerical body, contributing, as these changes did, to impart to that body its final and permanent character.

First. The acts and offices appertaining to each

\* Justin. Nov. 123, c. 5, 6.

† Can. 7, 20, 81, 83.

order of the clergy were now accurately defined, and determined with great precision; an arrangement which tended to establish the higher orders in the possession of their peculiar rights, and to carry to perfection the system of subordination already introduced.

Secondly. It was firmly established by law, that none should be eligible to the higher orders of clergy but those who had regularly passed through all the inferior gradations.\*

Thirdly. The power of the bishops over all the rest of the clergy became more unlimited and absolute than ever. The following measures, of this age, may be regarded as having, more or less designedly, contributed to this result. (*a.*) Stringent laws against plurality of benefices in the hands of presbyters.† Many cases of inconvenience to bishops had arisen from the circumstance of a presbyter being attached to several churches in different dioceses,—a presbyter having sometimes taken advantage of such a position, when quarrelling with his bishop, or being otherwise unwilling to comply with his injunctions, by withdrawing himself from his jurisdiction, and placing himself under the jurisdiction and protection of another who was ready to espouse his cause. But the dependence of the presbyters upon their own bishops was made more absolute when they had lost the power of migration. (*b.*) Strict force was now given to an old regulation by which a presbyter was forbidden to travel out of his own ecclesiastical province without a letter of introduction, *i. e.* a passport, from his bishop; and a rule was also established that no bishop should admit

\* Conc. Sardic. A. D. 347, c. 10, 13.

† See Council of Chalcedon, Can. 10.



a strange presbyter to any office in his diocese without letters dimissory from the bishop of the diocese to which he had previously belonged. Various other regulations were made with a view to keep the presbyters within their original limits of episcopal jurisdiction and control.

Fourthly. The bishops finally stripped the presbyters and deacons of their rights and influence in councils, and secured to themselves the sole right of voting in these assemblies. In the fifth century we find these inferior orders of clergy almost entirely excluded from synodal action, except in the capacity of assistants or delegates of their bishops. No law was ever passed to this effect; but the custom appears to have gained ground insensibly; and from this period onward in the history of the Church it was firmly established as a matter of strict and universal observance that no mere presbyters or deacons possessed the right of voting in general assemblies. All ecclesiastical legislation was thus vested in the hands of the bishops. The other clergy had now lost all legal power of acting in concert against the encroachment or despotism of the episcopal order; and all such attempts at united action were immediately branded as conspiracy.\*

Fifthly. All these means of influence were considerably strengthened by the circumstance that the bishops now secured to themselves the exclusive administration of Church property; a most important and decisive privilege, always advancing in value in proportion to the increasing amount of property which came into possession of the Church. Originally, the management of the Church revenues was intrusted

\* Conc. Chalcedon. Can. 18; Conc. in Trullo, c. 34.

to the deacons. By degrees, the deacons fell more and more under the control of the bishops, so that they were actually in the position of persons employed by the bishops, rather than of those who had been appointed by the Church to administer these matters themselves. At first, no doubt, the control of bishops over the ecclesiastical revenues through the deacons was only indirect; and besides this, there was the body of presbyters by which the interference of the bishops would be checked and limited; but when these obstacles were gradually removed, the bishops, from possessing a powerful influence in the distribution of the property, came to be regarded as invested with authority to dispose of it absolutely according to their own will. At the close of the fourth century, we find Chrysostom expressing an earnest wish that the administration of Church property were taken out of the hands of the bishops, and restored to the presbyters and deacons as in former times.\* By the Council of Antioch, A.D. 341, † it was declared that the bishops possessed the full right of control over Church property, being responsible for the management of it only to a provincial council. Soon afterwards, the Council of Gangra pronounced an anathema against all who should undertake to receive or distribute any portion of ecclesiastical revenue without the consent of the bishop or his appointed officer. And in the Apostolical Canons ‡ (probably assigned to this date), we find the control of Church property claimed for the bishops without responsibility to any tribunal whatever; and this claim is strengthened by the argu-

\* Hom. 86, in Mat. c. 27.

† Conc. Antioch. Can. 24, 25.

‡ Can. 39, 41.

ment, that if the precious souls of men are intrusted to the bishop, much more ought he to have the charge of so inferior a thing as money. Individual bishops did not always make a right or judicious use of their newly-acquired power in this particular; and it was even found necessary to enforce by law the long-established custom of dividing the whole revenues of the Church into three portions, one for the bishops, another for the clergy, and a third for the poor, for the fabric of the Church, and for expenses connected with the celebration of Divine worship,\*—or, as in some churches, including the Church of Rome, into four portions, one being set apart entirely for the fabric and expenses of worship.† Still, even under these circumstances, the direction of pecuniary affairs rested mainly with the bishop, and it was for him to say how much fell to the share of the other claimants. A door was therefore open for the practice of abuse; and Simplicius‡ tells us of one bishop who, during a period of four years successively, appropriated the whole revenue to his own use, leaving absolutely nothing for the rest of the clergy, the poor, or the fabric. In the middle of the fifth century, the administration of Church property was submitted to better regulations, and measures were adopted for placing a check upon episcopal avarice or prodigality. The Council of Chalcedon§ appointed a special officer (Economus) to conduct the administration of property under the superintendence of the bishop, and with provision that the bishop should not appoint his own

\* Conc. Bracar. 1, c. 25; 2, c. 7.

† Gelasius in Decret. ad Episcop. Lucanie, Siciliæ, &c. Decr. 27; Simplic. Ep. 3; Greg. M. lib. 4, Ep. 11.

‡ Ep. 3.

§ Can. 2, 25, 26.

Œconomus, who was to be chosen to his office by the whole presbytery ; the design evidently being, not to take the administration out of the hands of the bishop, but to restrain him from mismanagement or abuse. This law was afterwards confirmed by the emperor Justinian,\* and was repeated by subsequent councils.† Still, the appointment of such an office could present only a feeble barrier to the will of a bishop ; and it was likely that the Œconomus would, in many cases, become little more than the bishop's secretary or cashier. In point of fact, the real power of administration still remained where it was, and cases of abuse continued to occur.‡ It appears also that it was left to the discretion of the bishop to assign to each individual member of the clerical body what sum he might choose out of the whole of the amount which fell to the share of the clergy.§

On the whole, therefore, it is evident that the power of administering Church property must have contributed very materially to establish the authority of the bishops, and to raise it to little less than absolute despotism. "Despot," or sovereign lord, was indeed a title which bishops began to assume as early as the fourth century.

Lastly. Another circumstance which tended to the consolidation of episcopal power was a law to the effect that no clergyman should be permitted voluntarily to renounce his clerical character and return to the condition of a layman. It was regarded as an act of impiety and faithlessness to God and the Church,

\* De Episc. et Cler. c. 41.

† Conc. Tolet. 3, c. 48 ; 4, c. 6 ; Hispalens. 2, c. 9.

‡ Cod. Afric. c. 26, 33 ; Conc. Agath. Can. 7.

§ Greg. M. Ep. lib. 7, Ep. 8.

if not one of positive perjury, thus to abandon the vows of ordination: and it was held that every ordained person was indissolubly bound to the order which had been conferred upon him, having lost all liberty to retire from his relation to the Church. The first trace of a law on this subject is found in the canon of a Council of Chalcedon,\* which forbade any ordained person to return to the condition of a layman, in order to undertake any civil office or to enter the army. This was confirmed by subsequent enactments, and even by imperial legislation.† Afterwards, the opinion gained ground that a voluntary retirement from the clerical order was no less than the crime of apostasy in its most aggravated form, ordination being supposed to imprint an indelible character upon its recipient. It is plain that men who were thus deprived of the power of pursuing any other occupation in life after they had once been set apart for the discharge of clerical functions, were even, in this respect, greatly under the power of the bishop, who had authority to suspend them from the exercise of their office, and thus to deprive them of their only means of livelihood.

The influence of the clergy was greatly augmented during this period by their fraternisation with the monastics,—an order of men which dates from the third century, and, having continually increased in numbers and reputation, assumed now a more regular form. Having at first dwelt as recluses in remote or solitary places, they subsequently formed societies among themselves, and came to dwell in more popu-

\* Conc. Chalcedon. Can. 7.

† Conc. Turon. 1, c. 5; Cod. Just. lib. 1, tit. 3, l. 53; Nov. 5, c. 4; Nov. 125, c. 15.

lous regions, and even in the neighbourhood of cities ; and before the expiration of this period, especially after the establishment of the monasteries of Mount Casino by the celebrated Benedict of Nursia, the monastic life was reduced to a system little different from that in which it has come down to our own days. At first, the monks were simply laymen ; and the clergy of those days appear to have shrunk from anything approaching to an union of the new order with their own. Circumstances, however, gradually paved the way to an approximation. The new order had this in common with the clergy, that they were specially engaged in the cultivation of spiritual life, and many of its members began to occupy themselves with the work of reading and expounding the Scriptures,—an occupation which, together with their austere mode of life, being supposed to indicate superior sanctity and virtue, gave them great favour with the multitude, and speedily acquired for them such popularity and influence that the clergy could not but find in them either powerful allies or formidable rivals. When they began to form large and regular establishments, it was needful that some members of their body should be ordained, in order to secure the regular performance of Divine worship ; and, at length, not only was it usual for many members of a monastery to be in holy orders, but they frequently exercised their clerical functions beyond the confines of their establishments.\* At the same time, monasteries were placed under the superintendence of the bishops ; and, eventually, not only were the monks for the most part in holy orders, but it came to be regarded as an advantage for the clergy to possess the additional character of

\* Conc. Chal. c. 4 ; Aurelian. 1, c. 9.

monastics. Thus these two orders were, to a great extent, identified, at least in popular apprehension; and the result was, that a large portion of the influence and popularity of the monks was reflected upon the clergy.

During this period the laity lost nearly all share in the filling up of Church offices, and therefore also their original right of choosing their own ministers, representatives, or rulers. This right had been considerably impaired in the course of the third century. At that time the bishops had already begun to nominate the deacons, without any concurrence on the part of the Church. And we learn from the epistles of Cyprian that, although no presbyter could be ordained without consent of the Church,\* yet the former custom of election was no longer in force, the practice then being for a bishop to propose the candidates, but giving the congregation an opportunity of protesting against his ordination, if it could be proved that he was not a person of good life and conversation, or if any other impediment or just cause to the contrary could be alleged. Even this shadow of participation in the appointment of presbyters appears to have been almost entirely withdrawn about the middle of the fourth century; after that time, the form of asking the people's consent in such cases, but little or nothing more than the mere form, was retained.

The people appear, however, to have preserved the full exercise of their right in electing their bishops throughout the fourth century. Sometimes a candidate was proposed by the clergy, and sometimes a bishop may himself have recommended a successor; but in

\* Ep. 68, 33.

many cases the new bishop was nominated by the popular voice, and his admission to office always depended upon his election by the whole Church. Exceptions indeed arose from the occasional interference of the secular power; but this did not alter the case as regards the relation subsisting between clergy and laity.

At the same time, however, customs were being introduced and laws enacted, which manifested a disposition to increase the influence of the clergy in the appointment of bishops, at the expense of the people. Even the Council of Nicæa\* declared it necessary that all the assembled bishops of a province should concur in the election and admission of a bishop, hereby giving them a veto upon the choice made by the Church, and manifestly making a great practical encroachment on the independence of the community.

It was also ordained by the same council that the election of a bishop must be confirmed by the metropolitan; thus lodging another power in the clerical body to reverse the decision of the people in the choice of their own bishops. The metropolitan, however, was bound to confirm the election approved by the majority of the provincial bishops.†

The effect was that the laity gradually declined the exercise of a right which was thus to a great extent evacuated and reduced to an empty form. They were speedily satisfied with little more than the ceremony of giving their approbation to the nominee of the provincial bishop. Some cases indeed occur of violent resistance to the appointment of an unpopular bishop; on some occasions, also, we find a bishop appointed by

\* Can. 4.

† Conc. Nic. Can. 6; Arelat. 2, c. 5; Leo. M. Ep. 14, c. 5.



a tumultuary movement of the people;\* and in certain places, as at Rome, the rights of the people were maintained in exercise for a considerable time by the force of local circumstances and relations; but it appears that, before the end of the sixth century, this right of popular election had disappeared in most places, especially in the East. A law of Justinian, designed to restore this right to the people in some measure, serves only to show how far it had fallen into desuetude.†

As early as the third century, the laity had lost their legislative power, which was transferred to provincial councils. At first, the bishops attending a provincial council were regarded as the representatives or delegates of their respective dioceses; but it soon came to be understood that they met and voted in their own right, that their decisions were oracular, and their acts and ordinances divine. The fourth century witnessed the rise of General Councils; and the opinion was firmly established that their decisions were infallible, and that their authority, by Divine right, was paramount.

There can be no reason to doubt that the good fathers, acting in their capacity of ecclesiastical legislators, were for the most part animated by a sincere desire to promote the cause of religion and morality; nor can it be denied that many of their acts were attended with some beneficial influence; but also it is certain that, indirectly, and to a great extent undesignedly, their proceedings had the effect of fastening a yoke of bondage upon the great body of the laity.

It was established as a maxim that every layman

\* Martin of Tours; Sulpic. Vit. Mart. c. 7.

† Novell. 137. c. 2.

was bound to regulate his faith according to the prescriptions of bishops assembled in council; and that none were entitled to canvass or question any doctrines decreed by this authority. By Theodosius the Great laymen were expressly forbidden to hold any public discussions or lectures on religious subjects.\* To reject established doctrines was denounced as a crime at once against the Church and against the State; and all persons who should adopt and advocate contrary opinions were liable to the loss of civil privileges, confiscation of property, banishment, or (in some cases) death.† It does not appear that the penalty of death, although established by law under Theodosius, was ever inflicted during his reign. The blood of heretics does not appear to have been shed before the latter part of the fourth century; and then not without a loud protest on the part of some Christian bishops.

The custom of parties intending to marry giving notice of their intention to the bishop, and through him to the Church,—and that of parties at their marriage receiving the benediction of the officiating minister,—are of very ancient date, and may be traced to the beginning of the third century, or even to the latter end of the second.‡

During the period under review, the Church adopted many of the impediments to matrimony which had already been enacted under the old civil law, and established others of its own. Among the latter was a prohibition to marry during the Church fasts, especially during the great fast of forty days,—prohibition

\* Cod. Theod. lib. 16, tit. 3, l. 2; Sozom. H. E. 7, 6.

† Cod. Theod. Tit. de Hæret. c. 28.

‡ Tertull. De Pudicitia, c. 4; Clem. Alex. Paedagog. lib. 3, c. 11; Tertull. ad Uxor. lib. 2. c. 9.

also to contract marriage during a sentence of excommunication,—and a law\* forbidding persons to marry who had made a vow of chastity actual or implied.

Impediments already existing were now made more stringent. Such were, 1. Difference of religious worship; marriage with infidels, already forbidden, being now declared invalid, and marriage with heretics forbidden.—2. Adultery and abduction.—3. Consanguinity. At first the Church and Christian emperors adopted only the old Roman law *circa nuptias incestas*; but towards the end of the sixth century impediments of this kind were multiplied in practice, although not sanctioned by either the civil or ecclesiastical law, except that the marriage of cousins was forbidden by several Oriental councils,—a prohibition, however, which was not confirmed by the civil law. So that, on the whole, the laws relating to impediments from consanguinity, during this period, were substantially in conformity with the old Roman law; these impediments, be it observed, including all which were incorporated in the Mosaic law, and in some respects extending still further.—4. Civil relationship; the Church accepting the Roman law which constituted legal adoption an impediment, and forbade marriages between a freeman and a slave, regarding such union not as *matrimonium* but as *contubernium*.—5. Spiritual relationship. Marriages between sponsors and their god-children were forbidden for the first time by a law of Justinian, in the sixth century, with expressions of strong abhorrence.† In the seventh century the Trullan Council forbade also marriage between sponsors and the parents of their god-children. Per-

\* Conc. Chalced. Can. 16.

† Cod. Just. lib. 5, tit. 4, de Nuptiis, l. 26.

haps these laws originated in an imitation of those relating to consanguinity or civil relationship.

The Church was far less in agreement with the State on the subject of divorce. In this respect the old Roman law and practice had been exceedingly lax ; and when the Christian emperors endeavoured in some measure to restrain this evil by civil enactments, they often found themselves thwarted in their attempts, the laws of one emperor made with this view being often necessarily repealed by his successor. From the first the Church found itself unable to lend its sanction to principles so much at variance with the decision of its Divine founder (Matt. v. 32) ; and the opposition between the civil and ecclesiastical law on this subject was long a source of great difficulty and embarrassment. During the period now under review, this difficulty was in some measure obviated by a modification of the idea of divorce on the part of the Church, divorce being made to consist only in a formal separation of married persons, without leaving either party at liberty to contract a second marriage during the life of the other. Such cases of divorce the Church could permit, when it could not sanction full and complete divorce in the sense of the old Roman law ; and by this means it removed to a great extent the appearance of discrepancy between its own laws and existing civil enactments. The agreement thus effected was, however, only in appearance, not real ; and it was impossible but that the collision between Church and State must continue so long as the Church would not sanction full divorce, or complete solution of the matrimonial bond, in any case whatsoever, even in that of adultery. It could ill sustain the idea of two kinds of divorce, while the Roman law recognised only one.

This difficulty it at length overcame by affirming that divorce, in all cases alike, was no more than a separation of the married parties,—that even in the case of adultery it was only this separation which was permitted by our Saviour—and that there can be no solution of the matrimonial bond until death. In course of time, the laity were persuaded that separation alone was contemplated by the civil law in its various permissions of divorce; and afterwards, when the fallacy of this position was discovered, the Church was too much in the ascendant to be affected by the discovery,—its triumph over the civil law was, in this respect, complete. It may be added that the Church, which had long been more or less adverse to the contraction of second marriages, now at length succeeded in inducing the government to incorporate obstacles to such marriages in the civil legislation.\*

The clergy now found it needful or prudent to relax the severity of penitential discipline in favour of the laity. Until about the beginning of the fourth century, the laity continued to have some share in the administration of this discipline, as is evident from the history of the Novatian affair at Rome.† But before the middle of that century, the exercise of this right had altogether disappeared. From this time the bishops alone were regarded as possessing the power of imposing penance, inflicting excommunication, and granting absolution. At the same time the grievance of ecclesiastical censures and inflictions was naturally felt more sensibly than in former times; men became more unwilling to submit to these penalties, and hence were less free in confessing their offences, and disposed

\* Cod. Theod. lib. 3, tit. 8, l. 1, 2.

† And see Cyprian, Ep. 40.

rather to withdraw themselves as much as possible from the unwelcome visitation of episcopal punishments. It was probably this state of things which gave rise to a modification of the ancient discipline, as favourable as could be devised for the maintenance of episcopal authority and power. A distinction was now made between private and public sins; those being regarded as private which came to the knowledge of the Church only by the voluntary confession of the offending party, while all which were the subject of charge or accusation were regarded as public or notorious. It was also established as a rule that public penance must be performed for public offences, but that private penance should be considered sufficient for private offences. We have already seen that, in the latter half of the fourth century, a presbyter styled penitentiarius was appointed by the bishop, for the hearing of private confession, and the imposing of private penance or granting of private absolution.

The bishops were now intrusted with power to modify and abridge the penitential observances enjoined by ancient canons;\* and the exercise of this power induced a considerable relaxation of discipline during the sixth century. It is evident that by this means the episcopal body gained more power than it lost; more was left to the discretion of the bishops, and opportunities were increased of making the laity more directly and immediately dependent on themselves. Not that we are to suppose that the bishops deliberately aimed at an increase of their own influence by the introduction of this change; rather, the change which took place in this respect is to be attri-

\* Conc. Nic. Can. 12; Ancy. c. 5; Ilerd. c. 5; Chalced. 16; Cod. Afric. c. 43.

buted (as many others) to the force of circumstances and the altered position of the Church. Christianity having become the popular religion, and the Church having been united with the State, it had become impossible to maintain all the regulations and discipline which had been established while the Church was a small and independent body. And the same may be said with respect to the increased power of the bishops over the inferior clergy, the more monarchical form of Church government in general, and the gradual exclusion of the laity from the election of bishops, and from ecclesiastical legislation. These alterations were either wholly unavoidable, or more or less beneficial and expedient. But doubtless it is also true that the very remedies which were adopted for the evils or difficulties of one age became sources of inconvenience and mischief in a subsequent period of the Church's history.

While the Church was thus greatly extended, and incorporated with the State, the old diocesan constitution of the second and third centuries naturally became subject to corresponding modifications. Not only the revolution by which the Church had become dominant, but several other circumstances, contributed to this result.

Of all the changes which occurred during this period in the diocesan constitution, the most important was that by which the connection of country Churches with the episcopal city Church was made more close, and the permanent dependence of the former upon the latter placed upon a more secure footing. The rural bishops, although professedly subordinate to the town bishop, or bishop of the whole diocese, had yet possessed some share of episcopal authority and influence,

even in cases where the Churches over which they more immediately presided had been originally founded as colonies of the mother Church, and still more so when their Churches had been from the first independent. For some time, therefore, these rural bishops were felt to be a let and hindrance to the power of the diocesans; and from the beginning of the fourth century a vigorous and well-sustained effort was made for the abolition of their order. During the first half of this century, many councils not only emphatically affirmed the position of the rural bishops as subordinate to the diocesan, but moreover enacted various restrictions to limit them in the exercise of their authority. The Council of Antioch (A.D. 341, can. 10) enacted that no rural bishop should ordain to the higher order of the clergy (presbyters or deacons) but only sub-deacons or readers. A council at Ancyra\* seems to have given them permission to ordain presbyters and deacons by letters dimissory from the diocesan; but it appears that in other places they were obliged to ask the sanction of the diocesan even for the ordination of sub-deacons and readers.

At length, in 360, the Council of Laodiceæ† decreed that no more rural bishops should be appointed, and established episcopal visitors in their room; thus providing that the obnoxious order should gradually die away. Indeed, the Council of Sardica, A.D. 347,‡ had already provided that no more bishops should be appointed in villages and small towns, “lest the name and authority of bishops should be brought into contempt.” In the West, Leo the Great was especially

\* Can. 13; but the Greek is here evidently corrupt.

† Can. 57.

‡ Can. 6.



earnest in the abolition of this order.\* Nor do the rural bishops appear to have made any opposition to this measure, or to have put forth any struggle for their existence; they had long been practically over-awed by the diocesans, and had doubtless contributed to forge their own fetters by servile submission. In some parts of the West, especially in Gaul, the title of rural bishop was in certain instances retained during the lapse of several centuries; but it was evidently a title without power, and was held only by the surrender of all authority and influence. When, in the ninth century, the so-called rural bishops of Gaul attempted to assert something like an equality with the city bishops, they were immediately suppressed.†

The abolition of rural bishops must have contributed to extend the limits of dioceses; because, in the original irregular formation of dioceses, there were many Churches under a rural bishop not attached to any particular diocese, and of course when these peculiarities were done away they were regularly annexed.

At the same time the bishops became bound, or, rather bound themselves, in councils, to constant residence in their dioceses. The Council of Antioch, A.D. 341,‡ prohibited bishops from quitting their dioceses for the sake of attending the emperor's court. The Council of Sardica§ repeated the prohibition, and extended it to other cases, making it unlawful for a bishop to absent himself from his diocese for more than three weeks together on any plea, or for any cause, whatever. The emperor Justinian afterwards permitted absence for a year,|| but strictly enjoined

\* Ep. 12, c. 10.

† Capit. Reg. Franc. lib. 6, c. 121; Leo III., Ep. 36, ad Episc. Gerin. et Gall.

‡ Can. 11.

Can. 8, 9, 10, 11, 13.

|| Novell. 6, c. 2; 67, c. 3.

metropolitans and patriarchs to take care that this term was not exceeded. The Trullan Council,\* however, reversed the more stringent enactment of Sardica, which decreed that no bishop should absent himself from his diocese, and no presbyter from his church, for a space of time longer than three weeks.

This provision for residence was of itself an obstacle to interference by any bishop in the affairs of another diocese; but, not content with this, the Church made special regulations against such disorderly proceedings;† and, particularly, it was enacted that no bishop should perform the act of ordination out of his own diocese.‡

Another obligation was also imposed upon the bishop to visit every church in his diocese at least once a year. We find that this was the regular practice of bishops towards the end of the fourth century;§ and it appears that, on occasion of these annual visitations, the bishops collected the revenues due to them from the several Churches in the form of oblations and other income received during the year, leaving to the local clergy what was deemed sufficient for their maintenance.|| This custom of annual visitations had become firmly established, independently of any ecclesiastical canons; and we find it recognised by councils as right and binding.¶

Translations of bishops from one diocese to another were also forbidden;\*\* a prohibition, it may be observed,

\* Can. 80.

† Can. Ap. 36; Conc. Antioch. c. 13, 22; Trullan. c. 20.

‡ Conc. Constantinop. c. 2. Conf. Theodoret, H. E. lib. 4, c. 13.

§ Sulpic. Sever. Vit. S. Mart. Dial. 2; Athanas. Apol. 2; Chrysost. Hom. 1 in Ep. ad Tit.

|| So also in the sixth century, Greg. M. Dial. 3; Epp. lib. 11, Ep. 22.

¶ Conc. Tarracon. c. 8; Bracar. 2, c. 1.

\*\* Conc. Nic. can. 15; Sardic. c. 1, 2; Antioch. c. 21. Conf. Can. Ap. 14; also Leo M. Ep. 83, c. 8.

which tended to repress various disorders, and especially to check the influence of the court, by destroying that spirit of dependence upon imperial favour which the possibility and prospect of translation from a smaller diocese to a larger contributed to foster. It was hardly to be expected, however, that a law such as this could be punctually observed under all the circumstances which would arise during a long course of time, or that it could stand against the various efforts and designs of private interest and ambition. Means of evasion were, in fact, adopted, not without the sanction of councils. A clause was introduced into the "apostolical canons,"\* by which translations of bishops were not only permitted, but positively enjoined, whenever the interests of the Church should require such a proceeding. A distinction also was drawn between translation and migration.† Still, however, the prohibition continued to form part of the canon law; and hence, in order to effect a translation, it became the practice for a council to decide upon its legality, that is, to declare that it was not within the prohibition.‡

To this period also belongs the regular formation of parishes, in the modern acceptance of the term. The word "parish" was in use as early as the third century; but it was at that time equivalent to "diocese." In primitive times, the diocese of a bishop was, for the most part, neither more nor less than what is now called a parish; and, even when the jurisdiction of bishops had grown extensive, the diocese long continued to be called the parish.§ Afterwards, how-

\* Can. Ap. 14.

† Conf. Epist. Pelagii 2, ad Benignum Archiepisc. ap. Baron. ad an. 590, n. 7.

‡ Cone. Carth. 3, c. 27.

§ See Euseb. H. E. 4, 15, 23; 5, 24; 7, 3.

ever, the term came to be limited to the district belonging to a single church, over which a presbyter presided, who was hence called *parochus*. Even before the end of the third century there appear to have been rural churches, the duties of which were performed by presbyters belonging to the church of some neighbouring city, subject to the jurisdiction of its bishop. After the abolition of rural bishops, this state of things considerably increased; and it appears that, in the course of the sixth century, the term "parish" was generally applied to these separate churches and districts.

The fourth century witnessed the establishment of parish churches in large towns generally; a custom which had already prevailed in capitals, such as Rome and Alexandria; the chief church of the city being now called "*cathedralis*," because the bishop's seat (*cathedra*) was there—and the others "*ecclesie plebanæ*." During this formation of the parochial system, the diocesan bishops took care that the several parish presbyters should not be bishops in their own churches, and measures were adopted to retain these churches in a state of dependence on the mother or cathedral church. The diocesans, however, were often obliged to allow the parish churches a greater degree of independence than they were of their own accord willing to concede to them. At first, the bishop appointed one of the cathedral clergy to officiate in a parish church; afterwards, presbyters were ordained especially for certain churches, their ordination and appointment being still vested with the bishop. When it became necessary to appoint several clergy to one parish, still the appointment was retained in the hands of the bishop; in some

places only permission being granted to the parishes to choose their own readers and choristers. The bishops also retained the right of recalling or removing a parish priest, and transferring him back to the body of cathedral clergy. Still more effectually were the parochial clergy kept in a state of dependence upon the bishops, by regulations concerning the sphere of their duties. At their first origin, and throughout the fourth century, they were permitted only to preach, to instruct catechumens, and to administer the offices of religion to the sick and dying, but not to administer the sacraments, nor to excommunicate offenders or to absolve penitents, without special permission from the bishop. In the fifth century it had become impossible for all communicants to repair to the mother or cathedral church, and permission was granted to administer the Lord's Supper in parish churches,—the elements, however, having been previously consecrated in the cathedral, and sent thence for use to the several churches. Afterwards, the privileges of parish churches and of the parochial clergy were still further extended; full permission for the complete celebration of both sacraments was given,—the parochial clergy were authorised to pronounce the sacerdotal benediction, or to conduct the religious solemnity, at marriages,—and it was even enacted that every parishioner should receive these offices at the hands of no other than his own minister. At the same time the parochial minister was qualified as penitentiarius within his own limits, certain cases only being reserved for the cognisance of the bishop. And thus the only spiritual act with respect to the laity now entirely reserved to the bishop was that of confirmation. These changes

we may regard in general as having taken place during the sixth century; and in this way the rights and powers of the parochial clergy were so far enlarged, that they had become, to a considerable extent, the representatives of the bishops in their own parishes. Hence it was natural that they should seek also to become proportionally independent of the bishops with regard to their incomes; and this most important change in the diocesan constitution was also by degrees effected. For some time after the first introduction of the parochial system, the revenues of a diocese continued to be regarded as a whole, the distribution of which was subject to the bishop; that is to say, whatever oblations or the like were made in parish churches were paid into the treasury of the cathedral church, as the one heart of the body, and thence distributed among the clergy after the claims of the bishop had been satisfied. This arrangement remained generally in force until the end of the fifth century, many parish churches having in the mean time greatly increased in wealth by means of bequests and donations, and having come into the receipt of considerable oblations. At this time the payment of fees for the performance of religious offices, which was at first purely voluntary, was exacted as a legal right or due,\* and regular tables of such fees were set up; a practice against which the protests of councils appear to have been without effect.† But in the course of the sixth century the revenues of the parochial clergy came to be considered simply as their own, the bishops being obliged to relax their hold of them.

The metropolitan constitution remained nearly in

\* Conc. Bracar. 2, c. 7.

† Conc. Emeritens. c. 9.

the state to which it had been brought during the third century; only the form which it had then assumed by custom was now more explicitly established by law. It was legally enacted that to metropolitans should belong the right of confirming the election of all bishops within their provinces, and of convening provincial councils,\* and they were, in like manner, formally invested with that jurisdiction over the bishops of their provinces,† and with that privilege of giving their advice or pronouncing decision in difficult or important cases,‡ which had already been conceded to them by general consent and common usage. In addition, they now received also the privilege of consecrating churches in the several dioceses of their provinces.§ And, what was of still more importance, it was decreed that the metropolitans should possess the privilege of furnishing the bishops of their provinces with *literæ formatæ*, and that it should not be lawful for any bishop to travel beyond the limits of the province without a passport or certificate from his metropolitan.|| In this last matter, we trace a significant and not unimportant encroachment of the see of Rome. Rome, as the ancient capital of the empire, and still the chief city of the West, was, doubtless, the great centre of attraction for bishops, as well as for other persons, on their travels; and it is probable that their numbers had rendered strict precaution more or less necessary on

\* Conc. Nic. c. 4, 6; Antioch. A.D. 341, c. 9, 19; Laod. c. 12; Chalced. c. 25.

† Conc. Carth. 3, c. 7; Toled. 3, c. 6; Matiscon. 2, c. 9.

‡ Conc. Sardic. c. 14; Milevit. c. 21; Can. Ap. 33, 36, 73.

§ Sozom. II. E. 2, 26; Euseb. II. E. 10, 3; Gelas. Ep. 1, c. 4.

|| Conc. Carth. 3, c. 28; Antioch. c. 9; Greg. M. Epp. lib. 7, Ep. 8; Justin. Novell. 6, c. 3.

the part of the Roman Church. How far a real necessity for extraordinary care on this head had arisen it may be difficult to say; but it is quite possible that there was felt a want of protection against imposture more complete than could be given by the letters (real or pretended) of metropolitans, who were often as little known at Rome as the bearers themselves. At all events, the bishop of Rome resolved not to be satisfied with the production of such letters; and he adopted the expedient of establishing an immediate connection with some principal bishop in each province, as his especial correspondent or agent, whom he empowered to grant *literæ formatae*, which alone he consented to accept, to the exclusion of those of the metropolitans.\* The bishop intrusted with the management of this business was usually the vicar of the see of Rome. It is plain that a practice such as this involved a depreciation of the metropolitan authority, and contributed to pave the way for a more extensive invasion of metropolitan rights and privileges on the part of Rome. The *literæ formatae* of metropolitans were, however, still available for the use of bishops travelling elsewhere than to Rome.†

The limits of metropolitan jurisdiction, which, in consequence of the rise and decay of large cities and the partitions of the civil provinces, had often become matters of dispute, were now settled, upon the principle that, for the future, the ecclesiastical boundaries of provinces should be conformed to the civil or political. Certain wholesome regulations were also made concerning the exercise of metropolitan pre-

\* Zosim. Ep. 5.

† Hilary (successor of Leo the Great), in an Ep. to Gallican Bishops, A. D. 462.



rogative and power. Metropolitans were forbidden to interfere in the internal government of the several dioceses in their province.\* The convening of provincial councils, which were designed as a kind of permanent senate or body of advisers to the metropolitans, was no longer left at their discretion; but it was enacted†—and the enactment was frequently repeated‡—that they should convene such councils twice a year, while yet, in many places, the old practice of their assembling only once a year continued to prevail; but the metropolitans had power to assemble councils more frequently, if they desired. Sometimes, however, it was found necessary to bind the bishops to attendance on these councils by the sanction of a penalty for non-appearance.§ With regard to complaints preferred against bishops, the metropolitans were required to consult the provincial council before proceeding to a decision; and they were expected to refer everything of importance, especially those things which affected the welfare of the whole Church, to that body.|| A metropolitan was not permitted to consecrate a bishop without the concurrence of several bishops of the province; ¶ he was himself consecrated by all the bishops of his province, or, in some countries, by a neighbouring metropolitan, \*\* in presence of all these bishops; the bishops of neigh-

\* Conc. Antioch. A. D. 341, c. 9.

† Conc. Nic. c. 5.

‡ Conc. Antioch. c. 20; Chalced. c. 1, 2; Agathens. c. 25; Can. Ap. 38.

§ Conc. Laod. c. 60; Arelat. 2, c. 19; Tarracon. c. 6; Carthag. 5, c. 10.

|| Conc. Antioch. c. 12, 15; Chalced. c. 9; Carthag. 2, c. 8; 4, c. 29, 26; Can. Ap. 74.

¶ Conc. Arelat. 1, c. 20; Nicen. c. 4; Carthag. 2, c. 3.

\*\* Conc. Aurelian. A. D. 540, can. 2.

bouring provinces also being invited to attend.\* All these provisions were evidently adapted to confine the power of the metropolitans within due limits, and to maintain the just independence of the provincial bishops.

It is probable, however, that, notwithstanding all precautions, the power of the metropolitans would have become excessive, had it not been checked by the patriarchal system, which took its rise during this period. From the middle of the fifth century, the title of patriarch was given to some of the greater bishops, who had the oversight, not only of all the bishops of a province, but of the bishops of several provinces, together with their metropolitans. These patriarchs were the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch. The foundation of this system had been laid even before the fourth century; its complete development was facilitated by the political division of the empire into four large prefectures. The bishops of Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch had, from early times, acquired especial importance in consequence of the extent and antiquity of these sees; and the see of Constantinople rose into importance also when that city was made the seat of empire. At the end of the third century, the authority of the bishop of Rome was recognised by the bishops of all the suburbicarian provinces, so that he was already more than a simple metropolitan; the authority of the bishop of Alexandria was owned by the six provinces into which Egypt was divided;† and that of the bishop of Antioch by the bishops of the fifteen provinces which constituted the so-called

\* Conc. Sardic. Can. 6.

† Epiphan. Har. 78, c. 1, 2, 3.

Oriens.\* Some other metropolitans, as those of Ephesus and Heraclea, enjoyed the same distinction in a minor degree. This pre-eminence of the greater metropolitans was formally recognised by the Council of Nicæa.†

After the close of the fourth century they became formally invested with superior authority. They were constituted and entitled Patriarchs; a change immediately consequent upon the exaltation of the metropolitan of Constantinople to a position of rule and authority over the provinces of Thrace, Pontus, and Asia.‡ They were now invested with the right of consecrating all metropolitans within the limits of their patriarchate;§ so that the metropolitans were no longer consecrated by the assembled bishops of their province. Indeed, the patriarch of Constantinople soon claimed the right of consecrating not only all metropolitans, but all bishops of the several provinces; thus taking from the metropolitans a right which had been confirmed to them by the Council of Nicæa. This attempt, however, did not succeed.|| To the patriarch also was given the right of convening General Councils, consisting of the bishops of all their provinces; and to them lay an appeal *in causis majoribus* from the decisions of metropolitans.¶

This patriarchal system was regarded, not as dissolving or suspending, but rather as completing, the diocesan system already established. The appointment of patriarchs gave superiors to the metropolitans, and practically to them alone. The provincial bishops

\* Hieron. Ep. 60, ad Pammach.

† Can. 6.

‡ Conc. Chalced. A. D. 451, Act. 15, can. 28.

§ *Ib.*, Can. 28.

|| Conc. Chalced. Act. 16.

¶ Conc. Chalced. can. 9, 17; Justin. Nov. 123, c. 10, 23; Nov. 137, c. 5.

were not oppressed by it, but rather their condition was improved, a check being given to the tyranny of their more immediate superiors.

These patriarchates differed very much in size. With respect to territorial extent, that of Alexandria was the largest. As to the number of churches and ecclesiastical provinces, Constantinople had the pre-eminence. In both respects, that of Rome was the smallest, unless it be regarded as comprehending all the Churches of the West, which, in point of fact, it did not.\* It is also to be observed that the patriarchal system extended only to the limits of the Roman empire, east and west; not to the Churches which existed in Persia, Arabia, and part of Armenia.

As to the question of Romish supremacy, it may be observed that during this period various attempts were made, including even some systematic efforts, to establish an universal ecclesiastical monarchy in favour of the bishop of Rome. But it cannot be said that this supremacy was yet actually founded: it was designed, but not accomplished.

From the beginning of the fourth century the bishop of Rome was more decidedly than ever distinguished as the first bishop of Christendom,—a distinction which he evidently owed to his locality, in the ancient seat of empire. The Romish see now became also incomparably richer than all others.† At the beginning of the fifth century we find that the Church of Rome possessed large estates in almost all provinces of the empire,—not only in Italy, but also in Gaul and Spain, in Sardinia and Africa, and even in Asia.

\* This claim was advanced by Innocent I. in his *Ep. ad Decentium Eugubini*. But see *Greg. M. Epp. lib. 1, ep. 54*.

† *Hieron. Ep. 61, ad Pammach. : Ammian. Marcell. lib. 27, c. 3.*

These patrimonies it probably owed to the respect paid to St. Peter, regarded as the founder of that Church, rather than to the so-called (and probably fictitious) donations of Constantine; but, be this as it may, certain it is that, at the end of the fifth century, no Church in Christendom could at all be compared with Rome in point of wealth. Such wealth was, of itself, no inconsiderable element of power; and its possession was the source of peculiar advantages to the Romish see. As a landed proprietor in so many provinces, the bishop of Rome found perpetual occasion to mix himself up with their ecclesiastical and political affairs; by means of his agents or stewards he was brought into connection with the principal persons of the provinces, and found many opportunities of extending his influence,—by the performance of services, by exciting hopes and expectations, and sometimes even by collisions and quarrels, in which Rome was sure to have the upper hand.

Under these circumstances it can be no matter of surprise that the idea of ecclesiastical supremacy had begun to spring up in the minds of the Roman bishops. But towards the attainment of this object they proceeded very leisurely and unostentatiously, awaiting favourable opportunities of strengthening and consolidating their power, but not omitting to make good use of these occasions whenever they occurred.

Such opportunities were presented, as we have already seen, by the disagreements which existed among Oriental bishops during the Arian controversies, and afterwards by the quarrels which arose between the patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria, out of their mutual jealousy. Amidst these disagreements, the weaker or defeated party often applied for

protection to the bishop of Rome. Thus did Athanasius of Alexandria, when ejected from the East in 339 ;\* and Chrysostom, when driven from Constantinople by the party of Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, in the year 403.† In 429, Cyril, patriarch of Alexandria, appealed to Cælestinus, then bishop of Rome, for assistance in expelling Chrysostom from Constantinople. In all these cases the Roman bishops availed themselves of the opportunity thus presented to them of making it appear that the parties who had applied to them had implored their judicial interference,—had brought their cause to their tribunal as supreme, and by way of ultimate appeal,—had thus recognised their judicial authority,‡—and had conceded to them a supremacy over the whole Church.

For the present, even this pretension met with vigorous resistance. The oriental bishops whom Julius summoned to appear before him, in the matter of Athanasius, protested vehemently that he was not competent to judge the cause, and declared that he had nothing to do with their affairs.§ And the same position was taken with regard to Innocent I., when he undertook to interfere in the case of Chrysostom.|| Still, however, some cases occurred in which no protest was made; and in other instances these claims were more or less cheerfully admitted, under the prospect of some immediate advantage.

In course of time, the bishops of Rome found

\* Probably the opponents of Athanasius first applied. See Natal. Alex. Sæc. 4, Diss. 22.

† Palladius, *Vita Chrysostom.*, p. 30, *seq.*; Socrates, *H. E.* 6, 17; Tillemont, *Mémoires*, tom. xi. p. 441, *seq.*

‡ See *Julii Ep.* 1, ad Eusebianos (A. D. 340).

§ Socrat. *H. E.* lib. 2, c. 12; Sozomen, *H. E.* 3, 8.

|| Palladius, in *Dial. de Vita S. Chrysostomi*, p. 23.

themselves in possession of that office of a judge in the last resort, concerning matters and persons ecclesiastical, which they had claimed in virtue of their pretended supremacy,—the only right which they had yet claimed, but from which they afterwards proceeded to derive others.

At the same time the bishops of Rome appealed to certain pretended legal foundations or confirmations of their claims, utterly defective and insufficient, but able to serve their purpose in the absence of better. Such were the celebrated canons of the Council of Sardica, to which reference was made as involving a most solemn and complete recognition of Romish supremacy;—a decree of the emperors Gratian and Valentinian of the year 379 or 381;—and another of Valentinian III., to the prefect and bishops of Gaul (A.D. 447).

By the third, fourth, and fifth canons of the Council of Sardica, it was decreed, as we have seen, that in all causes relating to bishops an appeal should lie from a council to the bishop of Rome, and that in case of such appeal the sentence of the council should not be carried into effect until it had been confirmed after a new trial. It must be observed that the influence of the Roman see was here confined to the causes of bishops; and that it was enacted, not that the bishop of Rome should pronounce a decision, and still less that he should transfer the hearing of the cause to Rome, but only that he should entrust the second examination or trial of the case to a commission of neighbouring bishops, and give his sanction to their decision. Still, these canons cannot but be regarded as attributing to the bishop of Rome something very like supremacy in the Church—at all events

in the Churches of the West. And the same may be said respecting the decree of the emperor Valentinian, which enacted that every bishop should possess the right of appeal to the bishop of Rome, and that every metropolitan should be bound to appear, when cited, before the said bishop or a judge appointed by him.\*

And still more seemed to be conceded to the Roman see by the celebrated constitution of Valentinian III. (A.D. 445),† which contains a most formal recognition of its universal ecclesiastical supremacy, with all rights and privileges that could be deduced from such supremacy;—a recognition made with immediate reference to a case in which these rights had been called in question. By this constitution all bishops were bound to appear before the bishop of Rome, upon citation; so that the latter was in fact invested with power to institute inquiries concerning their conduct, and to proceed against them *ex officio*.

Now, without calling in question the genuineness of these canons and imperial rescripts, we may make the following observations concerning them. The decree of Gratian related only to a special case, which occurred within the metropolitan province of Rome. As to the Council of Sardica, it proposed to give what it had no right to give; for it was not a General Council when the Oriental bishops had withdrawn from it: its decisions were not immediately recognised in the East; and some Roman canonists consider its decrees as establishing the see of Rome a court of revision, rather than of appeal.‡ As to the constitution of

\* See Baronius, ad an. 381, n. 2.

† Baronius, ad an. 445, n. 9.

‡ Natalis Alex. Hist. Eccles. Sæc. 4, Diss. 28.



Valentinian III., it cannot be regarded in any other light than as a distinct and formal recognition of the ecclesiastical supremacy of Rome. But the operation of this decree extended only to the western portion of the empire,—and was probably confined even to Gaul. It is to be observed, also, that although this constitution is regarded by some as only the recognition of a divine right already established, yet its very enactment was occasioned by a case in which that right had been disputed; and that similar cases of resistance occurred afterwards,—even some subsequent emperors not recognising such supremacy of the Roman see as is herein attributed to it.

Not even the judicial supremacy, to which alone the bishops of Rome at first made pretensions, was ever formally recognised by the universal Church. Fifty years after the date of the Council of Sardica, it was ignored by the African bishops assembled in the matter of the presbyter Apiarius; and again, a quarter of a century later, by the Gallican bishops, as appears by the case which occasioned the rescript of Valentinian,—the controversy of bishop Celidonius with Hilary of Arles.

The bishops of Rome found indirect means of exercising their assumed authority of pronouncing judicial decisions in weighty matters affecting the general interests of the Church, and thus realised, to a certain extent, the idea of the papacy so far as it had already presented itself to their minds. This happened, for the most part, with reference to matters of faith and doctrine, of worship, or of ecclesiastical discipline. When difficulties or differences arose on these points, it was usual for application to be made to the bishop of Rome for his opinion or advice, sometimes

in a tone of flattery and excessive deference; and, when an answer was returned, for example, to a metropolitan or a bishop, in accordance with his views, but in a dictatorial tone, it was natural that the assumption of superiority should be overlooked in consideration of the advantage obtained by a favourable opinion. When it was really desired in a distant province to ascertain what was the doctrine or practice of Rome on any given point of faith or discipline, it is not surprising that toleration was given to a reply which declared, not only that such or such was the case at Rome, but that it must be so ruled everywhere else.

The rise of the metropolitan and patriarchal system of subordination, added to the vague and indefinite idea of pre-eminence attached to the see of Rome, tended also to prepare men's minds in general for the reception of this idea of supremacy in the person of the Roman bishop. At the same time it is certain that this idea had not yet become general in any fixed shape.

The influence of the bishop of Rome was now increased also by the assembling of Ecumenical Synods or General Councils, introduced when the disturbances arising out of the Arian controversy rendered it necessary that there should be some legislation for the whole Church, such as could not proceed from provincial councils. These councils were at first convened and presided over by the emperor; nor was any idea entertained that the right of precedence belonged to the bishop of Rome, or to any metropolitan or patriarch whatever. The first Roman bishop who made any claim of such right was Pelagius (A.D. 587, Ep. 8). The emperor appointed,

for the most part, some patriarch or other bishop to preside over these councils, according to his own choice, and without at all observing their relative rank in the matter; nor was any bishop of Rome called to preside over a General Council earlier than that of Chalcedon (A.D. 451). Besides this, these councils were attended by imperial commissioners, who were charged to maintain discipline, to preserve order, and to regulate the whole business according to the will and instructions of the emperor. Nor did the acts and decrees of these councils acquire the force of law until they were rendered valid by the imperial ratification. And all these regulations existed with reference to decrees on matters of faith and doctrine, as well as to those which related to ecclesiastical polity and discipline.

No ratification or confirmation of the decrees of these councils was given by the Roman bishop, except such as he gave in common with all other patriarchs and metropolitans. The only historical fact which has been urged in support of the right of such ratification, as vested in the bishop of Rome during this period, is not only not conclusive in its favour, but, rightly considered, decides against it. The decrees of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), were indeed sent to Rome for the approbation, or ratification, if it must be so called, of Leo the Great; but how far that ratification was regarded as necessary for their validity may be seen from the fact that, even when Leo protested against some of the decrees of that council, his protest was without effect. Indeed, so important was the imperial ratification of the decrees of General Councils, that it seems to have served as a pattern to the proceedings of some provincial councils during

this period ; for whereas, at first, their decrees were made and carried into effect without any sanction from the State, we find that, during the fifth and sixth centuries, instances occurred in which the bishops of a province sent their acts to the emperor for confirmation.\*

While, however, these General Councils, or Councils of the Church throughout the Roman empire (for such only they were), received the confirmation of their acts from the emperor under whose presidency, in person or by deputy, they assembled, they were not backward to claim for the same acts a special Divine authority. According to their own pretensions, the binding power of their decrees proceeded principally from the fact that those decrees were framed under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, whilst the civil power, by its ratification of those acts, merely declared itself ready to enforce obedience. This view of the Divine inspiration of synodal decrees had been entertained as early as the third century ; but it was greatly strengthened, and more positively insisted upon, after the introduction of the larger or General Councils.

Several collections of canons were made at a comparatively early period, some of which were in existence before the end of the fourth century. These early collections were, however, superseded in the sixth century by two collections of great note ; one by John Scholasticus, for the Oriental Church, which received the sanction of the emperor Justinian, whose cause, as well as that of the existing patriarch of Constantinople, it tended to serve ; and the other by a Roman monk, named Dionysius, as early as the

\* Baron. ad an. 541, n. 10.

beginning of the sixth century, for the Western Church. These collections now formed a corpus of ecclesiastical institutions, observances, and customs, which, being regarded with respect by all Christian Churches, constituted an additional bond connecting them together in one body. But their contents were miscellaneous, ill arranged, and likely to create confusion; a circumstance of itself by no means unfavourable to Roman power, which had already learnt to feed upon those contentions and disputes which were sources of weakness to other Churches of Christendom.

It has already been observed that the Papacy is to be regarded, not as a just and natural development of the primitive ecclesiastical constitution, but as a vast aggregation of evil elements superadded to those which, of themselves, are right and good. Of these evil elements one was, undoubtedly, that worldly spirit which prevailed, to an overwhelming extent, throughout the Church; and of this we have already seen many instances in the course of our history. But we have hitherto taken little notice of another of these kindred elements, which consisted in the widely-spread evil of popular ignorance and superstition. This subject, therefore, calls for some remarks.

One great and inveterate superstition, which had taken deep root even before the age of Constantine, was that whereby the clergy were no longer regarded in the true scriptural light of ministers of Christ and of the Gospel, but rather and chiefly as mediators between God and man,—as sacrificing priests, bearing the same distinct and sacerdotal character, and ap-

pointed to discharge substantially the same functions, under the Gospel, as the Aaronic priests under the Jewish dispensation. When once this system of true mediatorial or sacerdotal dignity and power had attached itself to Christian ministers in general, it was easy, and even more or less necessary, to concentrate it more and more, until at last it should be fully embodied in the idea of a pope as Christ's supreme vicar upon earth. This idea, which lies at the very foundation of the papacy, had already gained great ground when the empire was declared Christian.

Long since, also, had been manifested a disposition to embellish and recommend religion by self-invented arts,—to represent human opinions and fancies as having the sanction of Divine appointment and command,—to imagine frequent tokens or declarations of the Divine will, or of some extraordinary interposition and assistance from heaven,—to delight in a newly-invented piety and sanctity,—and to place religion especially in the observance of outward ceremonies.

Upon the accession of Constantine, the Christians came into possession of almost unbounded liberty to adopt, according to their inclination and imagination, any sensible representations of their religion, and any outward marks of their piety, which they pleased, and to gratify themselves with any degree of pomp and splendour in their churches or religious ceremonies. In this respect the example of the emperor, who eagerly seized upon opportunities of outwardly testifying his zeal in the cause of Christianity, had also a powerful influence. The bishops and other clergy, and especially the monks, manifested not only great indulgence for this supposed embellishment of Christianity, but gave it the sanction of their approbation,

and even urged it as a duty. Doubtless they considered that every demonstration of zeal and respect for religion possessed a certain value; but such a principle was indefinite and dangerous, and in the application of it they suffered themselves to be carried away by the general body of Christians whom they professed to govern and control.

It should be added that the Christians, being now masters of the heathen, and unwilling to yield to them on any point whatever, were not disposed to be behind them in the outward pomp of worship. It seemed likely also that a moderate and prudent adoption of some heathen ceremonies and customs, such as might appear consistent with Christianity, would tend to recommend their religion to the heathen, just as the transfer of some Jewish customs to the Christian Church had already produced a favourable impression on the Jews. But from the time of Constantine the Christians rushed into an imitation of the heathen without restraint, and without considering whether or not the practices they adopted were in harmony with the real principles and designs of the Gospel. Names, fashions, ornaments, and even certain preparations and appliances for worship, were too freely transferred from the heathen temples to the Christian churches. By degrees the churches were furnished with altars, images, tapers, incense, and costly vessels; and there was a pompous celebration of Divine worship which seemed likely to suit the taste of the heathen, who had been accustomed to find fault with the simplicity of the more primitive Christian ceremonial. To this system of imitation we may trace, among other things, the splendid vestments of the bishops.

It was natural, and, as it were, necessary, that at this time there should be a greater number of forms and ceremonies in the Christian Church than in primitive times; but great care ought to have been taken that, with all this, nothing should have been introduced contrary to the general principles of the Christian religion, or tending to overbear and overwhelm these principles. This was likely to take place amidst the growth of ceremonies in two ways: first, by fostering a persuasion in men's minds, in accordance with Jewish and heathen notions, that religion consisted in the punctual and regular observance of outward ceremonies; and, secondly, by the growth of an opinion or doctrine that such religious ceremonies were a matter of indispensable obligation, or a bounden duty,—so that Christian liberty would be abridged by the imposition and exaction of such performances. In either of these ways, a religious ceremonial might be changed into a baneful superstition; and such mischief had actually arisen at the beginning of the fifth century.

Constantine set an example of the custom of burying the dead in churches; whereas, according to an old Roman law, it was not permitted to bury the dead within the walls of a city. In this he was followed by other Christian emperors, then by the bishops of Constantinople, and afterwards by others who could afford to pay for the privilege.

Constantine himself was deeply infected with superstitious notions, either professedly or really; and the eagerness with which the story of the finding of the true cross by Helena was universally accepted may give some idea of the real prevalence of superstition in the minds of men of every class in the community.



The imperial example gave a great impulse to the practice of pilgrimages to holy places, and to the search after bodily relics of Christ, the apostles, and saints, connected with the idea of some extraordinary or miraculous power as appertaining to these things. It is obvious that this idea of the sanctity of particular localities was quite at variance with the fundamental principles of the Christian religion (St. John iv). True it was that by a visit to the scene of our Saviour's life and ministry the imagination of Christians might be elevated and kindled; but men grievously mistook in supposing that in this way their faith and piety could find true nourishment, or that they could rightly expect greater manifestations of Divine favour, or a larger bestowment of grace, at these places than elsewhere. Too late, although with good arguments, about the end of the fourth century, the bishop Gregory of Nyssa set himself against these superstitious pilgrimages.

From a fondness for relics, Christians passed by degrees to the worship of these objects,—a length to which this branch of superstition does not seem to have proceeded in the time of Constantine. In the description of new churches and of their consecration given us by Eusebius, no mention occurs of either relics or images; but, as early as 359, Constantius, son of Constantine, caused the bodies of St. Andrew, Luke the Evangelist, and Timothy,—which were said to have been discovered, the first in Achaia, the last at Ephesus,—to be conveyed to the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople. The bodies of other apostles, and other relics of the primitive ages, were not “discovered” for the most part until several centuries after the age of Constantine; but we hear of

some remains of Jewish prophets in the fourth century. Bones of John the Baptist were said to have been found during the reign of Julian; and those of the prophet Samuel at the beginning of the fifth century. The emperor Arcadius caused these relics to be transported from Judea to Constantinople, whence they were placed in a golden vessel, covered with silk, and carried in solemn procession by bishops, attended by a great multitude of people.

Such discoveries were, of course, open to suspicion; and it was soon judged expedient to have recourse to pretended revelations, pointing to the spot in which these precious relics were to be found, in order to secure confidence. Thus, at the beginning of the fifth century, the presbyter Lucian professed to have received a supernatural indication of the spot in which the bones of the martyr Stephen were deposited, near Jerusalem. He affirmed that Gamaliel, the teacher of St. Paul, appeared to him in a vision by night, and gave him the requisite information; and that, when he had made some mistake as to the precise spot, Gamaliel appeared again to a monk, and described it more minutely, so as effectually to lead to a discovery.\* Hereupon, in presence of three bishops and a great number of people, they began to dig, and found the coffin; when immediately there was a great earthquake, and a most exquisite odour proceeded from the sacred relic. Seventy-three sick persons were cured by touching the body; after which the relic was kissed, and the coffin closed again. The body was then conveyed to the church, with the singing of hymns; but Lucian was permitted to retain some small portion of the relic, and some of the earth

\* Baron. ad an. 415, n. 6, *sq.*

in which the martyr had been buried. Some of this earth having been sent to Spain, which had been affected with a long drought, it was said that on the arrival of the sacred gift the rain began to fall copiously, and men praised God for St. Stephen.

To what an extent this branch of superstition had proceeded, and to what low artifices and occupations it had given rise, we may learn from a law of the elder Theodosius, A.D. 386, prohibiting the transfer of a corpse, after interment, to any other place, and the buying or selling of the bodies of martyrs.

By this time, small pieces of the pretended wood of the true cross were dispersed in all directions; and a belief gained ground that, notwithstanding much had been taken away, it was miraculously preserved from diminution, in order to meet the devotion of so many thousand Christians all over the world.

Already a custom had been introduced of collecting earth from the neighbourhood of the holy sepulchre, which was used as an amulet or charm against evil spirits; and it was asserted that in the place where it had been deposited a sick person had been miraculously healed.

Superstition made great progress during the latter half of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth.

The supposed perfection to which the monastic life was carried during this period was itself an instance of a high degree of superstition, and became afterwards a great means of propagating this evil throughout the Church.

The veneration of saints, which proceeded to a high pitch during this period, is a remarkable instance of a defection from the first principles of Christianity.

The martyrs soon recommended themselves to the affectionate regard of Christians by their steadfastness even unto death, the severity of their sufferings, the strength of their faith, and the beneficial results of their faithfulness and constancy. As early as A.D. 169, we find that Christians were in the habit of assembling at a martyr's grave on the anniversary of his death, which they celebrated with joy, as his real and best birth-day. But at that early period nothing like worship was addressed to the departed. Great respect was paid to confessors and martyrs before their death, during the third century, but still without superstition; only it may be observed that during this time the expressions of some writers concerning the value of martyrdom were extravagant and unwarranted. Until the middle of the fourth century, we do not find the least trace of worship paid to martyrs, or of invocation of their aid on behalf of the living. Rather, prayers were offered on their behalf; for it was, at that time, usual to offer prayers for the dead, and in these prayers martyrs were expressly included.

The most venerated teachers of the early Church believed that the saints were not admitted into heaven, or to a state of perfect felicity, immediately after death; and they assigned to them an intermediate place or region until the end of the world. Origen maintained that the saints departed interceded with God on behalf of those alive; and here was the foundation,—but still only the foundation,—of that religious worship of saints and martyrs which arose in the fourth century, and was afterwards greatly promoted by the monks, and by that spirit of heathenism which was imported by so many nominal converts into the bosom of the Church. The outwardly-converted

heathen found, with delight, their tutelary deities reappearing in the Christian saints and martyrs.

During the last thirty years of the fourth century, the custom began to prevail of preserving the bones of martyrs in the churches, and regarding them as endued with extraordinary powers,—an easy transition to the invocation and worship of martyrs. Even Augustine was so far misled as to speak of miracles as having been undoubtedly wrought by relics, and of Christians as being sanctified by the merits of martyrs, in the name of the Lord of martyrs.

Unhappily, the great teachers of the day rather encouraged than checked the vagrant imagination of the multitude, and their love of the marvellous and sensible. They excused and palliated even what they could not fully approve, and sometimes they inculcated notions which naturally led to the superstitious worship of departed saints; as when Basil taught that their souls were present where their bodies lay, and where their panegyrics were pronounced.

The worship of saints was greatly promoted by those panegyric orations, which were often extravagant and overwrought, while the orator indulged in apostrophes to the martyrs that might easily be mistaken for prayers or acts of adoration.

The weak and timid legislation of the fifth Council of Carthage (A. D. 398) against superstitions,—*i. e.*, against altars, &c., in places where no body of a martyr had been laid, or where no martyr had suffered,—shows to what an extent the practice had by that time prevailed.

The emperor Theodosius, when he was preparing for war against Eugenius, is said to have visited all places of prayer, attended by the clergy and the people, and

habited in a hair garment, and to have cast himself down before the tombs of the martyrs and apostles, imploring the needful help through their intercession.

The worship of angels and of the Virgin Mary appears to have taken rise during the fourth and fifth centuries, but it did not make progress so early as the invocation of martyrs. We find that during the latter half of the fifth century men commended themselves to the protection of the Virgin, and hoped to obtain forgiveness of sins through her intercession. About the middle of the sixth century, the emperor Justinian, in one of his laws, implored the intercession of the "holy and glorious ever virgin and mother of God, Mary," in order that God, by his means, might restore the empire.\*

With all this propensity to visible aids and objects of piety, it was long before the Christians possessed any images of Christ, or of the apostles and saints. Probably, the earnest protestations and active proceedings of the primitive Church, and even of the Church under Constantine, against the images of the heathen, still retained a salutary impression on the minds of men. Epiphanius, travelling in Palestine, discovered and tore asunder a curtain adorned with a picture of Christ or a saint. On the other hand, Paulinus, bishop of Nola, tolerated several representations of the Trinity, of the apostles and evangelists, and of Scripture history, in a church which had been built in honour of St. Felix, for the edification of the country people. In the course of the sixth century, however, we find traces of that superstitious use of images which afterwards became more common.

The teachers of the Church now not only tolerated

\* Cod. Justin. lib. 1, tit. 27.

and connived at superstitious notions and practices, but began violently to oppose and persecute those persons who endeavoured to point out the difference between true and false religion, and who exercised, or sought to exercise, Christian liberty in denouncing the errors of the times.

About 388, Jovinian, a monk of Rome, created considerable sensation by the publication of a work, the contents of which we are acquainted with only through the representations of his adversaries. Jerome, who wrote against him, sometimes quotes his words, but sometimes only gives his own representation of his meaning. According to him, Jovinian taught that virgins, widows, and matrons, if baptized, possessed equal degrees of merit, provided that their lives were equally religious and moral; that those who were once regenerate in baptism with a perfect faith would never be overthrown afterwards by Satan; that there was no difference, in point of merit, between fasting and the use of food with thanksgiving; and that all persons who had fulfilled their baptismal vows would partake of equal felicity in heaven.

Jovinian found many adherents at Rome, and by his influence some who had taken vows of chastity were induced to marry. But Siricius, at that time bishop of Rome, held a council in which his doctrine was condemned, and Jovinian together with eight of his adherents were excommunicated. Having retired to Milan, they were there condemned in a council under Ambrose; who, in his epistle on this subject to Siricius, tells him that these excommunicated persons were avoided by everybody. The party of Jovinian was in this manner speedily suppressed.

The last severe struggle between Christian piety

and superstition was fought between Vigilantius and Jerome, at the beginning of the fifth century.—Vigilantius, a native of Gaul, and presbyter of Barcelona in Spain, had become acquainted with Jerome during a visit to Palestine, and had already had some disagreement with him, having charged Jerome with a leaning to some of the errors of Origen. There was no good understanding between them when, in the year 404, Vigilantius wrote a book in which he boldly and vehemently attacked the prevailing superstitions. He denounced the veneration (adoration) paid to martyrs and their relics; blamed the “almost heathen custom” of burning tapers in the churches in the day-time, when relics, carefully preserved, were carried round and kissed; rejected the idea of the intercession of deceased saints for their friends on earth; and spoke slightly, if not altogether with a denial of their reality, of miracles said to be performed in the churches and at the tombs of martyrs. He condemned nocturnal assemblies for worship in the churches (except on Easter eve) on account of the excesses and vice to which they led; denounced excessive almsgiving, and especially the sending of too large alms to Jerusalem; exposed the errors prevalent with reference to fasting; and, above all, he opposed the prevalent system of celibacy, with the doctrines and principles by which it was supported, advising the clergy to marry.

The doctrines of Vigilantius met with a certain measure of approbation; and even some bishops (if such men are worthy the name of bishops, says Jerome,) assented to his position with reference to clerical celibacy, and favoured the marriage of their clergy. But two Spanish presbyters, Riparius and Desiderius, sent an account of these matters to Jerome, which



called forth from him an epistle to Riparius, and a book "Against Vigilantius," full of bitter invective, with a declaration that Vigilantius ought to be visited with corporal punishment. In Jerome Vigilantius found an adversary who, aided by the spirit of the times, was more than a match for him; and, as the result of this controversy, the reformer was effectually branded with the name of heretic, and exposed for many ages to universal detestation. It is still to the disadvantage of his memory that his writings are known to posterity through the works of his opponents.

During the fifth and sixth centuries the doctors of the Church loudly recommended the reading of the Scriptures; but then at the same time they taught that the meaning of holy writ was wrapped up in a sacred obscurity, occasioned, not by verbal difficulty, but by its deep-seated and manifold mystical sense, which rendered it more venerable, and could be ascertained only by the clergy themselves, with the aid of the fathers of the Church. It was not permitted to oppose the result of an independent study of the Scriptures to the prevailing system of theology. Under these circumstances, and in the midst of violent, though often frivolous, controversies, it is not surprising that the task of deciding matters of faith was left to the councils.

### CHAPTER III.

FROM GREGORY I. TO NICHOLAS I.

- A. D. 604.  
Sabinian. GREGORY I. was succeeded by Sabinian, one of his deacons, who had acted as his minister at the imperial court; who was himself succeeded by another of Gregory's deacons, under the title of Boniface III.
- A. D. 607.  
Boniface III. Phocas had now formally acknowledged the claims of the patriarch of Rome to the first rank, intending thus to allay his suspicion that the patriarch of Constantinople desired to wrest that honour from him, and appropriate it to himself.
- A. D. 608.  
Boniface IV. Boniface died after having held the see nine months, and was succeeded by Boniface IV., who held it until 615. We know little or nothing of his proceedings, except that he obtained permission from the emperor Phocas to convert the Pantheon at Rome into a Christian church, dedicated to the Virgin Mary and all Martyrs (now la Rotonda), into which the bishops conveyed many relics, while Phocas enriched it with costly offerings. We are equally ill-informed as to the acts of his successor Deusdedit, from 615 to 618.
- A. D. 615.  
Deusdedit.

Boniface V. (618-625) took a warm interest in the extension and establishment of the newly-founded Anglo-Saxon Church, and in the securing of his authority over it. In 624 he sent the pall to Justus, archbishop of Canterbury,—that mark of distinction by which the patriarchs of Rome had for some time past been in the habit of placing their yoke upon the necks of metropolitans and their provinces. He gave also to Justus permission to consecrate bishops.\*

A. D. 618.  
Boniface V.

More celebrated than these his immediate predecessors, but not to the credit of his orthodoxy, is Honorius, who occupied the see of Rome from 625 to 638. He took part in the political revolution of Italy, with a view to support his ecclesiastical power. The Lombards, having deposed their insane king Adaloald (or Adelwald), who was a member of the Catholic Church, and having raised to the throne his kinsman Ariowald, an Arian,—a measure in which even some bishops of Upper Italy had concurred,—Honorius applied to the imperial exarch at Ravenna, entreating him to use his influence for the restoration of Adelwald, and calling upon him to send to him the refractory bishops for punishment.† The exarch, however, found it more advisable to make peace with Ariowald; and thus the efforts of Honorius were rendered abortive. He seems, however, to have had so much influence with the new Lombard king as to have been able to nominate another bishop in the place of a certain metropolitan, whom he had pronounced a heretic.‡

A. D. 625.  
Honorius I.

Honorius retained the Anglo-Saxon archbishops in their dependence, and made an effort (but in vain) to

\* Beda, Hist. lib. 2, c. 7, 8.

† Baron. ad an. 626, n. 8, *sq.*

‡ Baron. ad an. 630, n. 4.

introduce the Roman custom of celebrating Easter among the Scots.\* It was not until the eighth century that the Scots complied with the Roman custom in this respect.

In the time of Honorius the heresy of the Monothelites took its rise. The explanation which he gave concerning the doctrines of this party caused him to be justly ranked among its adherents; on which account he was anathematised as a heretic by a General Council held shortly after his death.

A. D. 640.  
Severinus.

Severinus succeeded in 638, but was not consecrated till 640, in consequence of delay in the receipt of the imperial confirmation. He condemned in a council at Rome the Monothelite error, which had found a patron in Honorius. During his pontificate, Maurice, an officer of the emperor, attempted to seize upon the treasures of the Lateran palace; but was prevented from executing his purpose by Severinus, at the head of a large body of armed Roman citizens. Maurice, however, together with all the magistrates and officials of his party, put a seal upon the valuables—which, as Anastasius says,† had been left by Christian emperors and great men to the blessed apostle Peter for the redemption of their souls,—in order that they might serve as a fund for alms to the poor, and for the redemption of captives. At Ravenna also the ecclesiastical treasury was emptied, the principal clergy expelled, and a portion of the spoils were sent to the emperor Heraclius. This latter circumstance makes it credible that, while the clergy regarded the whole affair as an act of sacrilege, the court and emperor on the other hand felt that the enormous riches of the Church, which had so often been applied only

\* Beda, lib. 2, c. 18, 19.

† Anastas. in Severin.

to the extravagant decoration of sacred edifices, or to their needless multiplication, could be applied more advantageously to the service of the State.

John IV. succeeded in 640, and died in 642. He was followed by Theodore, who held the Roman see from 642 to 649. The Monothelite controversy was still raging, and the Roman bishop now took a more lively interest in it than ever. Theodore pronounced sentence against two Monothelite patriarchs of Constantinople, but without producing any effect in the East. Some additional strength was, however, imparted in his time to the Roman see, by the decision of an African synod, to the effect that all matters of religion must be laid before the apostolic chair, in order to derive from this source an agreement in true doctrine for all Churches.

A. D. 640.  
John IV.

A. D. 642.  
Theodore.

The next Roman patriarch, Martin I., was obliged to atone severely for disobedience to the commands of the emperor. In a council at Rome, A.D. 649, he solemnly rejected a rescript of the reigning emperor Constans, and another by Heraclius, concerning the Monothelite question. The exarch Olympius had already attempted to compel compliance with the emperor's orders, but in vain; and he had even become reconciled to the bishop. The emperor, however, sent into Italy another exarch, Theodore Calliopas, who, in the year 653, caused Martin to be seized in a church, and first transported to the island of Naxos in the Archipelago, whence, after a year's imprisonment, he was sent to Constantinople. Here he was severely treated. He was brought to trial on the charge of a conspiracy against the emperor, and of being in league with the Saracens; and, although not convicted of these crimes, he was condemned to death. The dying patriarch of

A. D. 649.  
Martin I.

Constantinople, Paul, besought the emperor to spare his life; and hence, in 655, he was sent into banishment, and soon after died miserably. He is regarded by the Church of Rome as a saint and martyr, nor can it be doubted that his firmness and constancy under suffering contributed to increase the influence of the Roman see. Miracles are said to have been performed at his tomb.

A. D. 654. Eugenius I. Martin was succeeded during his lifetime by Eugenius I., who held the see three years, and was followed by Vitalian.

A. D. 657. Vitalian. In 667, Egbert and Oswy, kings of Kent and Northumberland, sent Wighard to Rome for consecration as archbishop of Canterbury, to which office he had been elected. Wighard, with most of his suite, having died at Rome, Vitalian selected and consecrated, as his successor in the see of Canterbury, Theodore, a Greek by birth, but who had been brought up as a monk in the bosom of the Romish Church. The new archbishop was a man remarkable at once for learning and for zeal, and laboured successfully for the promotion of good order and discipline in the English Church; while he fully carried out the designs of Vitalian, by establishing the Roman ceremonial in Britain, and bringing the Church of this nation more completely than ever into subjection to the apostolic see, although he continued to maintain his own independence.

Vitalian failed in attempting to call to account the archbishop of Ravenna, who was properly independent of Rome, and who, under the protection of the exarch, retorted his anathemas, and held him at defiance. At his death this archbishop (Maurice) earnestly charged his clergy never to submit to Rome.

Adeodatus succeeded in 672; and his pontificate was signalised by the conversion of the Lombards from Arianism to the orthodox faith. After him came Domnus in 676. Domnus retained the see less than two years; but during that time, if the account of Anastasius be correct, Reparatus, the new archbishop of Ravenna, after having for some time maintained his independence, submitted himself to Rome.

A. D. 672.  
Adeodatus.

A. D. 676.  
Domnus.

The emperor Constantine V. now made overtures for the restoration of that unity which had long been disturbed by dissensions between the patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople on the Monothelite question. Agatho succeeded in 678; and in his time this reconciliation took place, in accordance with the imperial requisition. Agatho sent some bishops and clergy as his representatives to attend a General Council at Constantinople,\* armed with a synodal epistle from himself. These representatives of the Roman bishop took an active part in the condemnation which that council passed upon the Monothelite doctrines and upon their principal supporters, not hesitating to subscribe the canon in which the former bishop Honorius was by name denounced as a heretic. At this council also the head of the Roman see received that title of an œcumenical papa, or universal bishop, which two of his predecessors had so loudly condemned when applied to the patriarch of Constantinople.

A. D. 678.  
Agatho.

A. D. 680.

The compliance of Agatho with the imperial wishes was in some measure repaid by the emperor's consenting to forego, in future, his claim for the payment of a sum of money in connection with the imperial confirmation of a Roman bishop, although still retaining the right of confirmation.

\* Conc. Constantin. III. (sixth General), A. D. 680, 681.

Wilfrid, archbishop of York, was deposed, at the instance of Egfrid, king of Northumberland, by Théodore, archbishop of Canterbury, whom the king had gained over to his side by bribes; either, as some say, because the king, under the influence of his queen Irminburg, had become jealous of the wealth and splendour of Wilfrid, the extent of his monasteries, and the number of his armed retainers; or, according to others, because the archbishop had deceived the king in a matter of importance. Egfrid had requested Wilfrid to use his efforts in order to divert his first queen Etheldrid from her purpose of perpetual virginity; but, the archbishop having rather strengthened her in her resolution and exhorted her to seek a divorce from the king, she retired to a monastery. This account receives an air of probability from what is said by Bede;\* but it is capable of being reconciled with the other. The deposed archbishop, whose zeal for the Romish ceremonials was well known, applied to Rome, being the first of the Anglo-Saxon clergy who had taken this step; and in a council, held A.D. 679 or 680, was acquitted by Agatho, who issued an order for his restoration.† At first no attention was paid to this mandate, and the king threw Wilfrid into prison; but not long after Wilfrid was released, and restored to his see.

A. D. 682.  
Leo II.

Leo II. was elected to the pontificate, and was confirmed in his election by Constantine V., under the title of “the most holy and blessed archbishop of old Rome, and universal pope,” in the year 682. In an epistle to the emperor, this pontiff solemnly accepted the decrees of the sixth General Council, and denounced, among other heretics, his predecessor Hono-

\* Bede, lib. 4, c. 19.

† Bede, lib. 4, c. 12; lib. 5, c. 20.



rius, as having failed to purify his apostolical Church by apostolical doctrine, but rather, by base teachers, having polluted its hitherto unspotted faith. He repeated the same emphatic condemnation of Honorius in epistles to the bishops of Spain, to a nobleman of that country, and to the king Erwig. In return, the emperor declared the archbishop of Ravenna to be subject to Rome; and decreed that every newly-elected archbishop of that see should in future be consecrated according to the Roman customs. On this occasion, Leo reversed the law of Gregory I., that a bishop about to be consecrated should not pay any fee to the ecclesiastical officers of Rome for the pall; but he forbade (as his predecessor Adeodatus had also done) the annual commemoration of the archbishop Maurice, who had so resolutely maintained his independence of Rome.\* Thus the ancient rights of the archbishop of Ravenna were entirely taken away: the bishop of Rome, in union with the emperor, and in a good understanding with the Greek Church, was more a match for such an opponent.

Benedict II. succeeded Leo in 683. His consecration was delayed for a year after his election, waiting for the imperial confirmation. It was probably the frequent occurrence of such delays which led the emperor Constantine to enact that in future every newly-elected bishop should be consecrated immediately, without waiting for confirmation. It is difficult to suppose that such confirmation itself was hereby declared superfluous; the measure seems to have been intended simply to obviate the inconveniences attendant upon the delay of consecration. And it must be remembered that the exarch of

A. D. 684.  
Benedict II.

\* Art de Vérifier les Dates.

Ravenna was at hand to protect the imperial interests at every election. At all events, confirmation was again declared necessary by succeeding emperors. Constantine regarded Benedict as his personal friend, so much so that he sent him some hair from the heads of the two young princes, the acceptance of which denoted his adoption of them as his own children; just as Charles Martel sent to Luitprand, the Lombard king, the hair of his son Pepin with a similar view.

A. D. 685.  
John V.

Benedict presided over the see only two years, dying in 685; and his successor, John V., retained his dignity only one year. The archbishop of Cagliari, in Sardinia, having consecrated a bishop in that island without the consent of Rome, John, who claimed jurisdiction in the island with more right than that with which many of his predecessors had laid claim to jurisdiction elsewhere, convened a council, which decreed that in future the said bishop should be immediately subject to Rome.

A. D. 686.  
Conon.

After the death of John the election was contested; the clergy, magistrates, and other influential citizens supporting one candidate, and the general of the army being in favour of another. At length all parties agreed to reject both the existing candidates, and to elect an aged presbyter named Conon. He died in 687, leaving (as many of his predecessors had done) a rich legacy to the clergy and the monasteries. His archdeacon, Paschal, who was charged with the distribution of this treasure, did not scruple to offer it as a bribe to the exarch John, with a view to secure his election to the vacant see. John used his influence at Rome for this purpose; but the election was in favour of a rival candidate, Sergius, whom Paschal himself was obliged to acknowledge as bishop. At

A. D. 687.  
Sergius I.

the invitation of Paschal, however, the exarch came to Rome with a view to set aside the election of Sergius; but, finding this impossible, he secured his own interest by compelling the newly-elected bishop to give him the hundred pounds of gold which had been promised him by Paschal. In order to raise this money, and to excite dissatisfaction at the proceeding, Sergius pledged the costly lamps which had hitherto been suspended before the tomb of St. Peter.

Considering the weakness of the Greek emperors on the one hand, and the ambition of the Roman pontiffs on the other, it was not likely that a good understanding would long subsist between the Eastern and Western Churches; and under the pontificate of Sergius a rupture took place. Justinian II. caused a General Council to assemble at Constantinople in the year 691, for the purpose of completing the acts of the fifth and sixth councils previously held; from which circumstance the new council is sometimes called the Quinisext. Some of the canons of this council were highly offensive to the Church of Rome. By the thirteenth canon permission was given to presbyters and inferior clergy to continue in the married state. The second ordained that eighty-five apostolical canons should be received as genuine. The thirty-sixth repeated the celebrated canon of Chalcedon, and a canon of the first Council of Constantinople, enacting that the patriarchs of old and new Rome should possess equal privileges, but assigning superiority of rank to the former. The fifty-sixth repeated one of the apostolical canons, which provided that no ecclesiastic should fast on a Sunday or a sabbath (except one in the holy week) under penalty of deposition, and no layman under penalty of excommunication;

Conc.  
Quinisext.  
A. D. 691.

and this law, said the council, shall be observed in the Church of Rome, in which there has hitherto been fasting on the sabbath, contrary to ecclesiastical regulations. The sixty-seventh canon prohibited the use of animal blood in the preparation of food. The eighty-second forbade the ancient custom of representing "Christ our God in the figure of a lamb," declaring that it was more seemly to represent him as a perfect man, for the purpose of exciting feelings of devotion.

Sergius, although he had doubtless been summoned to this council, did not send any deputies to attend it; probably foreseeing that some laws would be passed at variance with the customs or institutions of Rome. At the same time, however, he had his representative or ambassador at the Imperial Court. Basil, metropolitan of Gortyna in Crete, subscribed the acts of the council as "representative of the whole synod of the Roman Church." Immediately after the subscription of the emperor, and before those of the other patriarchs, a space was left for the subscription of the patriarch of Rome. It was generally supposed that the decrees of this council were as binding upon him as upon any other bishops of the empire; and, from the prohibition of customs which prevailed in the Roman Church, it is evident that the head of that particular Church was not then regarded as the law-giver of the Church universal. The emperor sent a copy of the decrees of the council to Sergius for his subscription. Sergius, however, would not even suffer the decrees to be read in public, and declared that he would rather die than give his consent to the innovations which they contained. Anastasius says that deputies from Sergius were present at the council

(alluding probably to the representatives mentioned above),—that their subscription was obtained by unfair means,—but that Sergius himself refused to adopt laws so much at variance with the constitution of the Church. Enraged at this resistance, the emperor sent Zacharias, the commander of his body-guard, to Rome, with orders to bring Sergius to Constantinople. The pontiff was, however, protected by the soldiers stationed at Ravenna and in the district of Pentapolis and its neighbourhood, who absolutely refused to suffer him to be carried away. They even repaired to Rome, where Zacharias, in fear for his life, fell at the feet of Sergius imploring his protection, and even crept under his bed as a hiding-place. His life was spared; but the soldiers were not appeased until they had driven him from the city with the utmost demonstrations of contempt and detestation. About this time (A.D. 695) the emperor was deposed; and no notice was taken of the indignity thus offered to his officer. The Quinisextine decrees were never received by the Church of Rome.

The interference of the soldiers in protecting the Roman patriarch against the emperor was a bad precedent, and formed another step in advance towards papal supremacy. During the brief pontificate of John VI., successor of Sergius, the soldiers again assembled tumultuously, on occasion of a visit of the new exarch to Rome, and would have attacked the exarch but for the interference of John, who shut the gates, and sent some of his clergy to quell the disorder. Bower says that the exarch was about to depose the pope, but of this there is no proof; and the probability is that the soldiers were merely irritated by the recollection of the past, and were excited by their own

A. D. 701.  
John VI.

ungrounded fears relating to the object of the exarch's visit. So great was the weakness of the imperial government in Italy at this period that it could not prevent the devastating irruptions of the Lombards into the Greek territory. Gisulf, the Lombard duke of Benevento, now plundered and laid waste Campania, and even approached Rome. He was induced to retire by John, who ransomed the captives whom he had taken.

A. D. 705.  
John VII.

Justinian II., being now restored, sent two metropolitans to the new pontiff John VII., requesting him to convene a council, in which he should confirm such of the Quinisextine decrees as he pleased, and reject the others. But John was too politic to do either the one or the other.

If we may credit Anastasius and Paul Diaconus,\* Aribert, king of the Lombards, restored a province of Upper Italy, called Alpes Cottiae (the Genoese territory, and part of Milan and Piedmont), to the Roman see,—a territory which had formerly been taken from it by the Lombards. But we cannot find that the Romish Church had ever previously possessed this territory. The probability is that by the “*patrimonium Alpium Cottiarum*,” these writers meant to say that the bishops of Rome had possessed estates in those parts, as in other parts of Italy, which had either been presented to them in the name of St. Peter, or had become theirs by purchase. The Lombards had probably stripped them of their possessions for a time, and now restored them.

A. D. 708.  
Sisinnius,  
Constantine

Sisinnius was patriarch of Rome in 708, for only twenty days. During this brief period he had set about repairing the walls of Rome,—a patriotic and

\* Anastas. p. 319 ; Paul. Diac. De Gest. Lang. lib. 6, c. 28.

useful undertaking, by which the pontiff, like some of his predecessors, sought to obtain the good will and respect of the citizens, but which did not by any means imply, as some would have it, that he was now sovereign of the city. In fact, either from design, or by the natural force of circumstances, the Romans had come to regard the bishop as their protector, rather than the imperial general; and they had a deeper veneration for the so-called successor of the prince of the apostles, resident among them, and making the value of his presence continually felt, than for the weak, and to themselves useless and hence contemptible, emperor, who resided at a distance. At this time the throne of Constantinople was occupied by one of the weakest and most despicable of the emperors, Justinian II. The only wonder was that the Romans retained even the appearance of submission; or that they did not put themselves under the exarch of Ravenna, or under their own bishop, as their sovereign head.

Hence we can readily account for the splendid reception given at Constantinople by Justinian II. to Constantine, the successor of Sisinnius. Justinian had desired the presence of the Roman pontiff in the imperial city, probably with a view to secure him to his own interest, and to put an end to the differences which had arisen out of the decrees of the Quinisextine Council. Upon the approach of Constantine to the imperial city, he was met, at the distance of several miles, by Tiberius, the son of the emperor, with the great officers of state, the patriarch and all the clergy, and a vast multitude of people; and, with this distinguished escort, mounted on a horse splendidly caparisoned, which had been provided for his use, he made

his entrance into the city. The emperor, who was then absent from Constantinople, thanked him in writing for his visit, and invited him to come to him at the place of his residence. Here Justinian, with his crown upon his head, fell down before the Roman pontiff, and kissed his feet; and the spectators congratulated themselves on the devout humility of the good prince. On the day following, the emperor received the eucharist at the hands of Constantine, commended himself to his intercession with the Most High for the pardon of his sins, confirmed all the privileges of the Romish Church, and then dismissed him. It is well known that the kissing of the foot was a mark of respect which had been paid to the emperors themselves, and we need not be surprised to find such a prince as Justinian disposed thus to grovel before the patriarch of Rome; but that this patriarch should consent to receive such a token of submission from his sovereign, is one of the broad marks of distinction between the bishops of Rome in the eighth century, and their predecessors in better times.

It is probable that Constantine, during his stay in the East, gave his assent to the Quinisextine decrees, so far as they were not at variance with the regulations or customs of Rome.

Felix, archbishop of Ravenna, had withdrawn his obedience from the see of Rome: for this crime he was now punished by Justinian with the loss of sight and banishment; and he was restored to his office only after having professed repentance for his crimes.

The orthodoxy which had been revived by the temporary agreement between old and new Rome, was, however, of no long continuance. Justinian II. was deposed and put to death by Philippicus Bardanes.



The new emperor declared himself in favour of the Monothelite doctrine, and endeavoured to gain admission for it into Rome. Constantine, however, rejected his overtures; all Rome was excited with zeal for the orthodox faith, and a picture representing the six General Councils was hung up in St. Peter's church; the name of the emperor was omitted in the public prayers; and civil commotions began to take place. In 713, however, Philippicus was murdered, and, Anastasius the new emperor being orthodox, peace was again restored: Constantine received his confession of faith, and sent an accredited agent to Constantinople.

Gregory II., who succeeded Constantine in 715, occupied himself at first with repairing the walls of Rome, and recovering some of the temporal possessions in Italy which had been taken from the holy see. A. D. 715.  
Gregory II.

During his pontificate, a celebrated Anglo-Saxon monk, Winfred (afterwards called Boniface, the apostle of the Germans), became an instrument in extending the influence and authority of Rome among the northern nations. Having the conversion of these people at heart, he made two journeys to Rome (A. D. 718, 723), where he took an oath of fidelity to Gregory, and received a commission from the patriarch, who well knew how to employ the zeal and energy of such a man for the promotion of his own interests. It often happens that a person of moderate ability, who can see only just before him, when he has been for some time employed under a skilful leader in carrying out his plans, attains a good measure of skill and tact, and learns to go alone. Thus it was with Boniface. At first he was the mere creature of the Romish patriarch, and was willing to pay the most unlimited

obedience to him, in order to gain needful support in favour of his great object, the conversion of the heathen ; and under these circumstances he solemnly subjected to the Roman pontiff the whole German Church. Afterwards, however, he found means not only to maintain a certain degree of independence, but to exercise a kind of dominion for himself, in conjunction with the supremacy of Rome. If we rightly understand the title, and so far as the Romish patriarchs had already become popes in the modern signification of the word, we may call Boniface the first papal legate in Germany. He was entitled, indeed, only the ambassador of St. Peter ; but he was in fact the pattern of all those who have been subsequently sent forth simply in the name and for the interests of the so-called successors of the apostle.

While Gregory II. was thus beginning to bind the Germans to his see, the pilgrimages of the Anglo-Saxons to Rome were becoming more and more frequent. On one of these occasions, Ina, a king of that nation, laid the foundation of a more close dependence of his Church upon the see of Rome, and originated the payment of the yearly tribute denominated St. Peter's pence.

In 725, Eudo, duke of Aquitania, received as a present from Rome three sponges which had been employed in wiping Gregory's table. In the following year Eudo reported to the Romish patriarch that, in a battle which he had fought with the Saracens, 375,000 of the enemy had been slain, while only 1,500 of his Franks had fallen ; adding that he had cut the sponges into small pieces, which he had distributed among his soldiers, and that not one soldier who had received one of these pieces had been either killed or wounded.

In 716, Leo the Isaurian ascended the imperial throne; and ten years afterwards he issued the celebrated decree that no image (*i. e.* statue or picture) of Christ, the angels, apostles, saints, or martyrs, should be worshipped or tolerated throughout his dominion. Gregory, being required to enforce the fulfilment of this decree under penalty of deposition, not only refused to obey the emperor's command, but declared the whole proceeding heretical, and warned every man against complying with it. Violent hostilities now commenced between Gregory on the one hand, supported by the inhabitants of Rome and Italy, together with the Lombard princes, and the emperor and exarch on the other. According to the Greek writers, Gregory withdrew Rome and all Italy from its obedience to the emperor, and forbade the payment of tribute to him. Others say that Gregory made indeed a strong protest against the emperor's impiety, but that, when the Italians not only resisted the decree but began to take measures for the election of a new emperor, Gregory rejected the proposal. Some few indeed declared themselves on the side of the emperor and the decree, but they were soon overpowered and silenced. In reality, there is not so great a difference between the account of Anastasius and that of the Greeks as may at first sight appear. According to him, although Gregory may have inveighed only against the religious errors of the emperor, yet his sayings and measures were quite adapted to excite disaffection and a revolt against his authority; and Baronius\* grants that Gregory at last promoted the revolt against the emperor. Launoi,† indeed, shows, against Baronius, that the Greek account is incorrect, and that the

\* Baron. ad an. 730, n. 5. † Launoi, Ep. VII. lib. vii. p. 456, *s. l.*

Roman patriarchs of this reign did not lay any claims to the right of interfering with the civil power, or with the revenue of the emperors. The fact seems to be that Gregory, by his theological attacks upon the emperor, accomplished more towards the overthrow of the Greek empire in Italy than he probably intended. We must take into account the already existing disaffection of the Romans, and other Italian subjects of the emperor; and we must also bear in mind the neighbourhood of the enterprising Lombards, who were only watching their opportunity; but still it was the blow levelled by Gregory which first set all these unfriendly elements in motion, and greatly contributed to the eventual severance of Italy from the imperial crown.

We should gain much information on this subject from the correspondence which took place between Leo and Gregory, if all the epistles on both sides were extant. Of these epistles we have now only two,\* from Gregory to Leo, probably of the date of 730, and therefore written at a time when the fermentation occasioned by the image-controversy had attained a great height in Italy: these are insolent and haughty, with an appearance of humility; and, under the pretext of asserting ecclesiastical rights or spiritual authority, they breathe the very spirit of insubordination, and of reckless disobedience to the civil authority of the emperor.

While Gregory thus favoured a revolt against his sovereign, he exposed himself to the danger of falling under the dominion of the Lombards. But neither the pontiff nor the Romans wished to make this ex-

\* Baron. ad an. 726, n. 28; and see Pagi, Crit. in Ann. Baron. ad an. 726, n. 3—6.

change of masters; their desire was to obey the emperor as far as they chose, and to enjoy the benefit of his protection. They especially dreaded the Lombards. Gregory the Great had often called them an impious nation; and they were loaded with reproaches by Gregory II. and his successors. The Lombards, however, especially under Luitprand, contemporary with Gregory III., were in a highly-flourishing condition, and might well have looked down with contempt upon the proud and restless, but yet weak and helpless, Romans. The Arianism of the Lombards, and their irruptions into the imperial dominions, may be enough to account for this antipathy. Luitprand took advantage of the disturbances of Italy. Having seized upon Ravenna and its territory, he received the submission of several smaller towns, and at length came to an agreement with the patrician Eutychius, upon the understanding that the latter should occupy Rome and carry into execution the order of the emperor against Gregory, but that he himself should be permitted to reduce to their allegiance the Dukes of Spoleto and Benevento, who had renounced his authority. Having accomplished this object, Luitprand advanced with his army close to Rome, probably with a view to plunder the city. Gregory went out to meet him, and by pious entreaties persuaded him to abstain from doing any injury; when Luitprand threw himself down at the pontiff's feet, took off his costly armour, and laid it, together with his golden crown and a silver cross, before the tomb of St. Peter. He then offered up his prayers, and besought the pontiff to be on good terms with the exarch; a result which in fact took place.

It was now the plan of the Roman pontiffs to unite

with the Franks against the emperor. Zonaras\* seems to have wrongly concluded, from some later accounts, that they even sought support from this quarter in their revolt against the imperial authority. But the account of Anastasius † is more entitled to credit, that they sought help from the Franks against the Lombards. These two nations were, in fact, jealous of each other; but at this time there existed an unusually good understanding between Luitprand and Charles Martel, and hence it may have been that Gregory's attempts failed.

A. D. 731.  
Gregory  
III.

Neither of the three parties in this incipient revolution could long remain precisely where it was. The Roman pontiff, Gregory III., could not but feel his power, and know how formidable he was to the emperor. For the emperor the decisive moment had arrived upon which it depended whether he should retain his dominion in Italy or lose it for ever. And the Lombards now seemed to have but to take one step more in order to be masters of Rome. The same may be said also of the Franks, whose terms of amity with the Lombards were not likely to be of long continuance, and to whom Rome was, in fact, stretching out her arms. Here, then, were the seeds of new commotion, which soon began to take place. Gregory III., suddenly elected by the people, and afterwards confirmed by the exarch, addressed a letter of expostulation to the emperor Leo and his son Constantine on the subject of image-worship. The presbyter, by whom this letter was sent, did not at first venture to deliver it; being sent again, he was seized and thrown into prison in Sicily. Hereupon, in 732, Gregory convened a council,—attended by ninety-three bishops,

\* Zonaras, *Annal. lib.* 15.

† Anastas. in *Stephano III.*

by his clergy, and many of the principal inhabitants of Rome,—in which he pronounced an anathema against all who should oppose the worship of the images of God, of Christ, his mother, the apostles, and saints. But another ambassador, the bearer of an epistle from Gregory, perhaps with the decrees of this council, was thrown into prison in Sicily; and the same fate befel certain persons sent from the towns of central Italy to Constantinople to plead in favour of images. There was little hope of reconciliation, inasmuch as the anathema, though not directed against the emperor by name, yet clearly included him; and, as if in defiance of the imperial authority, Gregory set up in the churches of Rome the most costly images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and many saints. In 732 or 733, Leo equipped a powerful fleet, with a view to reduce the refractory Gregory, and the rebellious Italian cities, to obedience; but this fleet was wrecked and dispersed in the Adriatic. Leo proceeded, however, to confiscate the property of the bishops, or, as it was called, the patrimony of the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, in Sicily and Calabria.

It would have seemed now that Rome must fall into the hands of the Lombards. The Romans had maintained friendly relations with this people during several years, but in 739 they gave offence to Luitprand by favour shown to the refractory dukes of Spoleto and Benevento. War now commenced; Luitprand advanced with his devastating army as far as Rome itself; and Gregory applied for protection to Charles Martel,—a measure which eventually led to important consequences. In 741 he sent two several epistles to the Frankish monarch,—transmitted to him the keys of the tomb of St. Peter, with fragments of

his chains,—and entreated him to abandon the cause of the emperor, and to protect the Romans against the Lombards.\* We do not know what effect this representation produced upon Charles Martel; but he gave a cordial reception to the embassy, and sent two of his clergy to Rome with rich presents.

A. D. 741.  
Zacharias.

Gregory and Leo both died in 741; and Zacharias, the successor of Gregory, concluded the treaty with Charles Martel. Pagi maintains that the confirmation of Zacharias was not sought from the exarch, and that from this time the custom ceased: but he brings forward no other proof than the shortness of time which elapsed between the death of Gregory and the election of his successor; whereas the continued dependence of Rome upon the imperial court is quite against his assertion. Bower says that at one time Zacharias was at the head of a Roman republic; but grants that, after the death of Charles Martel, he was obliged again to submit to the emperor. It should here be noted that some writers have affirmed that Gregory II., on occasion of the controversy respecting images, was made Prince of Rome. And it has been said that Gregory III. certainly had that dignity. But all this is unlikely; and it may be sufficient to observe that Zacharias continued to date his epistles by the year of the emperor. There can be little doubt that Zacharias remained for a time suspended, as it were, between the Greeks, the Lombards, and the Franks.

Rome's formidable neighbour, Luitprand, died in 744. He was succeeded by Rachis, who laid siege to Perugia, and meditated the subjugation of Pentapolis. Gregory repaired to his camp, and, by en-

\* See Baron. ad an. 739, n. 6; ad an. 740, n. 20, *seq.*



treaties and presents, induced him to raise the siege; and Rachis was so won over by the exhortations of the pontiff that, in 749, he repaired to St. Peter's church, with his wife and children, and was admitted to holy orders by Zacharias. Afterwards, himself and family embraced the monastic life. Aistulf succeeded to the kingdom of the Lombards, and soon became more formidable than Luitprand to the Romans and to the imperial power in Italy.

In the mean time, the friendship between the pontiff and the Frankish princes had been so firmly cemented that both parties were able to derive from it great advantage, with considerable strength against the Lombards. Charles Martel was succeeded by his sons, Carloman and Pepin, who reigned conjointly over the twofold kingdom of the East and West Franks. By permission of the former, the "ambassador of St. Peter," Boniface, held councils in his dominions, enacted laws, and founded bishoprics, archbishoprics, and monasteries; all in obedience to the will of his superior Zacharias, who supported him in the suppression of the so-called heretics. In the territories of Pepin, Zacharias made arrangements in the ecclesiastical constitution according to his desire, by means of the same representative, Boniface; and, in 747 or 748, he sent a reply to this prince, and to the spiritual and temporal lords of the Frankish kingdom, concerning the clergy and church discipline, enforcing the obedience of ecclesiastical laws. About the same time (A. D. 747) Carloman abdicated the throne, and came, with many of his nobles, and with large presents, into St. Peter's church, where he received the tonsure, and was admitted by Zacharias to holy orders. He afterwards remained some time in the monastery

of St. Silvester, on Mount Soraete; and subsequently resided in the celebrated abbey of Monte Casino, where he submitted to the most rigorous exercises of monastic discipline.

Pepin was now at the head of the Frankish monarchy, so far as his ancestors had been for the last fifty years, with ever-increasing strength; and he established himself in possession of this authority by his victories over the disaffected. Hence it is not surprising that he thought that the time had come in which he might deprive the Merovingian dynasty of that royal dignity which they had continued nominally to possess down to that period. Relying on his influence with the Frankish nobles, and on the weight which would be attached by the nation to the opinion of the Roman pontiff, Pepin sent Burehhard, bishop of Wurzburg, and Fulrad, abbot of St. Denys, to Zacharias, with this question, "Whether the ancient kings of France, who were without kingly power, could continue to be kings? or whether he ought not rather to be king who had in fact the whole kingly power in his hands?" Zacharias declared himself in favour of the latter part of the alternative; and, accordingly, Childeric III., the last of the Merovingian princes, was deposed and compelled to retire to a monastery, and Pepin ascended the throne in his place. This occurred probably in 751 or 752.

A. D. 752.  
Stephen II.  
and III.

Zacharias died about the same time. His successor, Stephen II., retained his office only three days; and was succeeded by Stephen III.: the latter, however, is by some reckoned as Stephen II., the former not being included in the list, because he was not consecrated.

Aistulf, king of the Lombards, having entered the imperial territory and seized Ravenna, Stephen sent

an embassy to him with presents, and induced him to make a truce for four years ; but at the end of four months he was again in arms, and threatened to reduce Rome itself, and to impose upon its inhabitants the payment of a yearly tribute. Stephen implored assistance and protection from the emperor, while Aistulf himself threatened to put all the Romans to the sword if they refused to acknowledge him as their master. Having no hope of assistance from the imperial court, Stephen had recourse secretly to Pepin. Pepin, by his ambassador, declared himself willing to lend his protection ; and it was agreed that Stephen should repair to Pepin in person. At the same time (A. D. 753) Stephen addressed himself to the Frankish nobles, entreating them, out of love to the apostle Peter, their guardian, to fight with their king for the rights of the apostle and of the holy Church, in order that by him their sins might be forgiven, and that by this gate-keeper of heaven, according to the power intrusted to him by God, the portals of eternal life might hereafter be thrown open to them.

At an interview with Pepin, Stephen obtained promise of the needful assistance ; and in return he anointed Pepin the second time, and also his two sons, Charles and Carloman, kings of the Franks and Roman Patricians. Pepin at first endeavoured to obtain by negotiation from Aistulf the restoration of all the possessions of the Church on which he had seized ; among which, according to the language of the Roman historians, he perhaps artfully included Ravenna and Pentapolis. Aistulf at first refused to accede to this request ; but at length, in 755, he was compelled by force of arms to promise compliance.

No sooner, however, had Pepin quitted Italy than Aistulf refused to fulfil the terms of his promise. Hereupon Stephen forwarded heavy complaints to Pepin, adjuring him by all the powers of heaven, and for the welfare of his soul (*pro mercede animæ vestræ*), to give practical effect to the donation which he had made.

Matters proceeded to still greater extremities. In 755 Aistulf laid siege to Rome, plundered and set fire to the churches, burnt the images, and devastated the surrounding country. These calamities Stephen represented in another supplicatory letter to the Frankish princes, reminding them of their accountability to the apostle Peter. He addressed another epistle to Pepin alone, and a third, in the name of St. Peter, to the three kings and the whole nation of the Franks.\*

Accordingly, in 755, Pepin again entered Italy with his army, in order to compel Aistulf to observe the terms of his compact. The Lombard king, besieged in his capital, Pavia, itself, could no longer hold out, and was obliged to restore the so-called property of St. Peter and his Church.

Pepin had clearly no right (no other right than that of the conqueror) to make this donation; but by so doing he inflicted a blow upon the power both of the Lombards and of the emperor in Italy. By this means the Roman pontiff's became still more formidable than ever to the Imperial Court; and Pepin paved the way for himself and his house to the dominion of a part of Italy, by increasing the dependence of the holy see upon himself. An imperial ambassador endeavoured, in vain, by offers of a large present,

\* Cod. Carol. III.

to induce Pepin to restore the exarchate and Pentapolis to the emperor. Pepin answered, with an oath, that what he had once given to St. Peter and the Church of Rome he would never take away from them, for any sum whatever; and that he had fought, not out of favour to man, but for the love of the apostle and for the forgiveness of his sins. This plausible answer was perhaps not altogether without grounds. Pepin, in common with his contemporaries, believed that presents made to saints and churches formed a sure means of obtaining remission of sins and exemption from merited punishment. He had unjustly seized upon the Frankish kingdom, and, in return, he presented St. Peter with a territory (to which he had no right) in Italy, in order that the apostle might obtain for him the Divine forgiveness of this sin and all others. But if Pepin had no right to confer this donation, what right had the Roman patriarch to accept it? and how could he, properly a teacher and governor of a Christian Church, presume to become a temporal prince? But Western Christendom had long been prepared for such an unseemly transformation; and, although some maintain that the popes at first held the exarchate as vassals of Charlemagne, standing in the same relation to him as that which they had hitherto occupied towards the Byzantine emperors, it is generally agreed that from the time of Stephen the popes of Rome have taken rank among the temporal princes of Europe. Thus, as the contentions and quarrels of bishops had contributed to exalt the Romish see to a position of ecclesiastical supremacy, the distraction of kingdoms and ambition of rulers now began to establish the pope in the rank of a temporal prince, and to assist him in

obtaining a dominant influence over the affairs of foreign kingdoms.

Aistulf did not surrender to the Roman Church all the towns which were included in Pepin's donation. But after the death of this king in 756, or, as Stephen III. writes,\* "after that this tyrant and follower of the devil, struck by the hand of God, had been thrust into the depths of hell," more favourable prospects opened, in consequence of certain disturbances among the Lombards. The duke Desiderius aspired to the kingdom; but Rachis, brother of the deceased monarch, who had long lived as a monk at Monte Casino, came forward as a rival. Desiderius implored the aid of the pope; and, when he had promised, under oath, that he would surrender to St. Peter the towns of Faventia, Imola, Ferrara, Ausimum, Ancona, Humana, and Bononia, Stephen called upon Rachis, and the Lombards generally, not to offer any opposition to his claims. Fulrad, with a number of Franks, had hastened to his aid; and Roman troops were ready to act in the same cause. By these means Desiderius was firmly settled on the throne; and he made over the duchy of Ferrara, Faventia, and two small places, to the Romish Church.

A. D. 757.  
Paul I.

Upon the death of Stephen, his brother, Paul I., was raised to the see by the stronger of two parties. His pontificate was distinguished partly by earnest efforts for the complete and secure possession of the territories which had been granted by the Frankish king, and partly by the remarkable growth of papal power in Rome itself. Desiderius came to Rome, and promised to give possession of Imola; but soon

\* Epist. ad Pepin. Cod. Carol. 8.

after committed great devastation in the region of Pentapolis. The dukes of Spoleto and Benevento had again rebelled; that is to say, in the phraseology of Paul, they had put themselves under the divinely-favoured protection of Pepin, and had taken an oath of fidelity to him and to St. Peter. Desiderius having probably still greater reason than his predecessors to pursue strong measures against such unfaithful dependents, who sought aid against himself sometimes at Rome and sometimes from the Franks, now carried his arms into the territories of both these dukes, took one of them prisoner, put the other to flight, and made an offer to the emperor to attack Ravenna in order to put it again into his possession. Desiderius, being at Rome, Paul besought him, by the body of St. Peter, to deliver up the remaining towns, but in vain; and again implored Pepin to assist him in the cause. The epistles of Paul to Pepin are full of bitter complaints against Desiderius and the Lombards. But in 766 we find Desiderius again at Rome, engaged in his devotions, and putting the Church in possession of some portion of its property. And Paul, who so often implored the king of the Franks to defend St. Peter against Desiderius, at another time entreated him to prevail upon Desiderius to aid him against the expected attacks of the Greeks upon Ravenna and Pentapolis. The fact was that Paul really feared and hated the Greeks far more than the Lombards: he hated them on account of their iconoclast tendencies; and he feared them on account of the injury he had inflicted by taking Ravenna. The relations of Paul to the imperial court cannot be really determined from his epistles. He sent ambassadors to Constantinople concerning the ques-

tion of images; whence it seems to follow that he had not quite broken with the emperor, otherwise the latter would not have received his ambassador: and, on the whole, it is probable that the imperial sovereignty over Rome continued to exist, although little more than in name. Paul died in 767, and was succeeded by Stephen IV. (or, as some reckon, Stephen III.) Pepin died in the following year, and was succeeded by his sons Charles and Carloman.

A. D. 768.  
Stephen III.  
or IV.

Great was the indignation of Stephen, and urgent were his expostulations, when a project was formed for the marriage of a daughter of Desiderius with one of these Frankish princes, Charles. The marriage however took place (A.D. 770); but in the following year the bride was sent back to her father,—no one knows why, says Eginhard,—but probably on account of the unpopularity of the alliance at Rome. This circumstance led to a rupture between the Frankish princes and Desiderius, quite agreeable to the wishes of the pope. In the same year Carloman died; and, Charles having seized upon the sole sovereignty without respect to the rights of the son of his deceased brother, the widow of Carloman, together with her sons, fled to Desiderius. It is clear that if the pope had a right to remonstrate with a Frankish prince against his marriage with a Lombard princess, he had a much greater right to protest against this act of injustice on the part of Charles. But there is no trace of any plea from Rome in favour of the sons of Carloman. Adrian, the successor of Stephen, soon had cause to complain of the conduct of Desiderius in laying siege to Ravenna and ravaging its territory. In answer to his complaints, Desiderius desired an in-

A. D. 772.  
Adrian I.



interview, with a design (says Anastasius) to persuade him to anoint the sons of Carloman kings of the Franks; and this with the further design of sowing such division among the Franks, that Rome and the rest of imperial Italy might be more easily within his own reach. But it was hardly likely that the pope would desert his old friends the Franks, so as to run the risk of exchanging his present independence for the dominion of the Lombards. He remained, says Anastasius, firm as adamant; and certain it is that he refused to grant the desired interview,—a refusal by which Desiderius was so enraged that he entered Italy and committed devastation in various places. Adrian endeavoured to soothe him by letter; but Desiderius insisted upon an interview; which Adrian refused to grant, unless all the property of the Church should have been previously restored. Desiderius then advanced to Rome, and Adrian prepared for the defence of the city; having sent three bishops to meet Desiderius and threaten him with excommunication if he should enter the Roman territory. Alarmed at this threat, Desiderius returned to his own dominions.

Driven to extremes, Adrian sought more earnestly and unconditionally than ever the protection of Charles. In 773 Charles entered the Lombard territory; he was everywhere victorious, and Desiderius was shut up in Pavia, and eventually obliged to surrender. Charles thus became master of the whole of Upper Italy, and of the Lombard states.

During the siege of Pavia in 774, Charles spent Easter at Rome. Here he was honourably received; and at the same time performed his devotions in a manner worthy of a true son of the Church. Adrian

took this occasion to entreat Charles to renew the former donations of the Frankish kings: with this request Charles did not hesitate to comply, and (if we may credit Anastasius) he even made important additions to the grant. He visited Adrian at Rome again in 781 and in 787; and on these occasions he is said to have extended his liberal donations. These donations were obtained from the Frankish king, "for the forgiveness of his sins," "for the ransom of his soul." Besides this consideration, the pope thought it good that earthly motives should be brought to bear; and hence, in all probability, arose, at this time, the celebrated forgery of the Donations of Constantine the Great. But the author of this forgery, and the form in which it existed in the time of Adrian, are unknown.

There is some obscurity as to the relations of Adrian and Charles, and indeed of Adrian and the Greek emperor, as to the sovereignty of Rome. But certain it is, that after the conquest of Lombardy, the power of Charles at Rome acquired a great augmentation, and soon became paramount.

(Second  
Council of  
Nicæa,—  
seventh  
General  
Council,  
A. D. 787.)

During the pontificate of Adrian was held the second Council of Nicæa (A. D. 787), being the seventh General Council, by which the worship of images was formally sanctioned, and the decrees of a council held at Constantinople, in 754, by which that worship was denounced, were condemned. The business of this council was conducted by Tarasius, of Constantinople, two legates from Rome being present; but the empress Irene declared Adrian president as being the chief bishop of the world. The decrees of this council, however, were not received in the West.

A. D. 795.  
Leo III.

Leo III., successor of Adrian, as one of his first

measures, sent to Charlemagne the keys of the tomb of St. Peter, and other presents, with a request that he would send an ambassador to Rome to receive the oath of allegiance. Thus Charlemagne was put in full possession of the city; and the pope having renounced subjection to the Greek emperors, their sovereignty over Rome was at an end.

In 799, three years after this subjugation of Rome to Charlemagne, we find him authorising a judicial trial of Paschalis and Campulus, two members of the clerical body, who had conspired against the life of Leo, and had succeeded in inflicting great indignities upon his person. In the following year the king went to Rome, and presided at the trial of the accused, who had brought charges against Leo. Leo solemnly declared his own innocence, and the conspirators were condemned.

In the same year, 800, Charlemagne assumed the style and title belonging to that sovereign power which he had for some time past possessed at Rome. On Christmas-day of that year, in the church of St. Peter, before the tomb of the apostle, when he rose from his devotions, Leo placed a costly crown upon his head, and the people shouted, "Life and victory to Augustus Charles crowned by God, to the great and peaceful emperor of the Romans!" Leo, having anointed him and his son, prostrated himself before him, and did homage to him as his sovereign. Henceforward he received with all due respect the laws of the new emperor of the West.

At the death of Charlemagne the popes possessed such an amount of power as to make them formidable, and even dangerous, to a weak government; and Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne, displayed in

his administration those points of imbecility of which Rome was then ready to take advantage. At the beginning of his reign some leading Romans formed a conspiracy against Leo. The conspiracy was discovered; and the pope, exceeding his lawful powers, caused the conspirators, after confession of their crimes, to be put to death. Louis did not approve of the proceedings, and instituted a commission of inquiry on the subject; but he was fully satisfied with the report which he received from one of his officers, and with the explanation which Leo was pleased to give.\*

A. D. 816.  
Stephen  
IV. or V.

Leo III. was succeeded by Stephen V. (or IV.), who was consecrated immediately on his election. That pontiff paid a visit to Louis at Rheims, where he crowned him and his queen, but not until he had received homage from the emperor, who recognised him as his spiritual superior, dismounting from his horse when he met the pontiff on the road, and falling prostrate before him. Stephen appears to have received from Louis a confirmation of his former territorial possessions, probably with some addition of land out of Italy.

A. D. 817.  
Paschal I.

Stephen died in 817; and Paschal I., who was elected to succeed him, was again consecrated without waiting for the imperial confirmation. The new pontiff, however, sent presents to Louis, with a letter of apology, declaring that his dignity had been forced upon him by the Romans. Platina says that the pope laid the blame of not waiting for the confirmation upon the clergy and people of Rome; and that Louis accepted this excuse, but told the Romans that in future they must not forget their duty, nor attempt to trench upon the rights of their sovereign.

\* Eginhardi Annales, ad an. 815.

Louis caused his son Lothaire, whom he had associated with himself in the empire in 817, to be crowned at Rome in 823. According to the monkish annals,\* it was Paschal who invited the prince to Rome for the purpose of coronation; and it is to be observed that the pontiffs who crowned both Charlemagne and Louis succeeded in making it appear essential to a lawful emperor of the West to receive the crown at the hands of the pope, and even established this prejudice in their own favour so as to survive the lapse of many centuries.

An event of the year 823 shows at once that the right of the emperor's supremacy was at this time acknowledged at Rome, and that his actual power was but very small. Two of the Roman clergy had been cruelly punished, and then put to death in the Lateran Palace, on account of their fidelity to the interests of Lothaire; and some said that this was done by command, or with consent, of the pope. As soon as the emperor heard of this transaction, he sent commissioners to inquire into it on the spot; but before they departed on this mission ambassadors arrived from Paschal to Louis, beseeching him not to give credit to the charge of his having been accessory to the death of these men. Louis gave audience to these ambassadors; but, notwithstanding their representations, he despatched commissioners to Rome. There, however, they could accomplish nothing. On the one hand, Paschal swore that he had had nothing to do with this transaction, while many bishops confirmed his assertion on oath; but, at the same time, the pontiff extended his protection to the murderers of the unfortunate men, on the plea that these murderers

\* Eginhardi Annales, ad an. 823.

belonged to the family of St. Peter (*i. e.* to the Roman court), and that the deceased had been justly put to death, as having been guilty of treason. The emperor, however, having received the affidavit of the pope, and his defence of the criminals, felt that he could proceed no further in the business. He must have lost much of his influence at Rome when it thus became evident that he could not avenge the cause of his faithful servants.

A. D. 824.  
Eugenius  
II.

Eugenius II. succeeded Paschal in 824. At the beginning of this pontificate Louis sent his son Lothaire to Rome, with a view to correct the disorders which had arisen, and especially to take measures for the security of life and property to the subjects of the emperor. On this occasion the clergy and people of Rome took an oath of allegiance to the emperor, and engaged that no new pope should be consecrated until he had taken this oath in presence of the imperial ambassadors and the people. At the same time, due obedience to the pope was insisted upon, as well as loyalty to the emperor; and the property and privileges of the holy see were strictly guarded.

A. D. 827.  
Valentinus.  
Gregory  
IV.

Not long after, a new pontiff, Valentinus, was consecrated without waiting for the imperial confirmation. He lived, however, only a month after his election; and when the election of his successor, Gregory IV., was reported to the emperor, the Romans did not venture to proceed to his consecration until the election had been examined by an imperial commission. This, however, was only a passing shadow of the power of Louis at Rome, and he soon himself gave the pope an opportunity of completely destroying his influence. Already, in 817, he had sown the seeds of disturbance and weakness by dividing his power

among his three sons,—Lothaire, as partner of the empire and heir,—Pepin, as king of Aquitaine,—and Louis, as king of Bavaria. Bernard, son of his deceased brother Pepin, now king of Italy, felt himself aggrieved by this distribution ; and, being supported by numerous malecontents, including several bishops, who were dissatisfied with the emperor's attempts at reformation, he sought means to withdraw himself from the supremacy of his uncle. His attempts utterly failed ; and he died, after having suffered the loss of his eyes, in 818. The bishops who supported him were deposed and consigned to a monastery ; and the emperor compelled also three sons of Charlemagne, who had taken no part in the insurrection, to become monks. Not long after, however, Louis was struck with remorse for his cruelty towards Bernard ; he restored his brothers to favour, assumed the attitude of a penitent, gave liberal alms, and commended himself to the prayers of the bishops.

This step, although doubtless it exalted the character of Louis in the eyes of the people, was, however, an act of humiliation under the power of the clergy which paved the way for still further degradation whenever an opportunity might occur of exhibiting Louis in the light of a criminal. Nor was it long before the clergy sought to take advantage of their position. Wala, abbot of Corbey, publicly and vehemently inveighed against Louis on the ground of his having (as was pretended) wrongfully interfered in the bestowment of church offices and application of church property ; several archbishops and bishops joined in the cry ; and in 830, when matters seemed ripe for insurrection, Pepin, the second son of Louis, appeared in arms, on the side of the mal-

contents, against his father; and Lothaire, taking advantage of this conspiracy, endeavoured to establish himself as sole emperor. The empress had already been compelled to take the veil, and Lothaire now attempted to induce his father to enter a monastery; but one of the monks whom Lothaire had employed with a view to work upon his father's mind secretly took measures to bring about his restoration, which was effected in 830. Lothaire submitted; and the empress was released from the convent by a decree of Gregory IV. and the Frankish bishops.

The part which Gregory took in this first insurrection, if not insignificant, was at all events obscure. But in the second revolution, which speedily followed, he unavoidably acted a more conspicuous part. Lothaire having been deprived of the imperial dignity, a strong letter of remonstrance from Agobard, archbishop of Lyons, had been imprudently addressed to the emperor, appealing to his conscience, and accusing him of perjury in withdrawing the dignity which he had conceded under the solemn sanction of religion. This letter, however, failed to produce its intended effect, and Lothaire was soon united with his two brothers in rebellion. Gregory now (A. D. 833) went to Germany, ostensibly with a view to effect a reconciliation between the three princes and the emperor, but really in the interests of the rebellious sons, and especially of Lothaire. Before his arrival it was reported that he was coming with a view to excommunicate the emperor and those bishops who had remained faithful to him. The bishops, however, appealing to the ancient and established ecclesiastical laws, declared that "if he came



to excommunicate he should return excommunicated." The epistle in which the bishops announced their constitutional resolution to the pontiff has perished, but his haughty reply has been preserved.\*

The presence of the pope in the rebel camp appears to have been decisive. Gregory had, indeed, paid a visit to Louis himself, while the two armies confronted each other, and assured him that he had come only in order to bring about peace; but no sooner had he returned to the camp of the insurgents than the imperial troops went over almost in a body, and Louis was obliged to surrender himself a prisoner into the hands of his sons. Lothaire was acknowledged emperor, and divided the empire with his brothers.

The new emperor conducted his father to the A. D. 833. monastery of St. Medard, at Soissons; and it was determined that Louis should receive at the hands of the clergy such a humiliation as should preclude him for ever from all hope of recovering the throne. Ebbo, archbishop of Rheims (who owed everything to Louis), and Agobard, with many other bishops, took part in this transaction. They reminded the dethroned monarch of his many sins, and exhorted him to repentance, in order that, although he had now lost his earthly crown, he might not come short of the kingdom of heaven; while, to assist his memory, they furnished him with a written catalogue of his transgressions. The unhappy monarch threw himself down at their feet, confessed all, entreated their intercession, and declared himself willing to submit to all due penance. They then caused him

\* Epist. Gregorii IV. Papæ ad Episcopos Regni Francorum (Labbe).

to repair to the church of St. Medard, where, in the midst of a large assembly, and in the presence of his son Lothaire and his court, together with a large body of clergy, he was placed before the altar. Here he threw himself down upon a hair-cloth, confessed that he had grievously sinned against God, had given offence to the Church of Christ, and had brought many troubles upon the people by his negligence. He begged to be admitted to public penance, in order that he might be delivered from the guilt of his many and complicated crimes by the ministry of those to whom God had given the power to bind and to loose. Once more the bishops exhorted him honestly to confess all his sins, and to keep nothing back, since otherwise he could not have reason to hope that he would receive pardon. They then gave him the list of his transgressions to read; and by this recitation he accused himself of sacrilege, murder, perjury, injustice, and mal-administration. Having read this paper with many tears, he delivered it into the hands of the bishop, who placed it upon the altar, and then stripped him of his royal and military attire, clothed him in the garb of a penitent, and, after imposition of hands with prayers and singing, dismissed him to his monastery. Soon, however, the misfortunes of the deposed monarch began to excite commiseration; his sons Louis and Pepin espoused his cause; and, in 834, Louis the Pious was again in possession of his throne. But he would not consent to resume the exercise of his authority until the bishops had solemnly absolved him in the church of St. Denys, and had invested him with the insignia of royalty. In the following year he summoned a council at Thionville,\*

\* Conc. ap. Theodonis Villan, A. D. 835.

in order that the sentence of the Church against him might be more formally reversed, and that the most obnoxious of the bishops might receive due punishment. Here all the bishops declared in writing that the former sentence was unjust; and these declarations were publicly read at Metz. Ebbo, archbishop of Rheims, was obliged to read the declaration with his own lips; and when the bishops had returned to Thionville he was deprived of his office. Other bishops, who were absent, including Agobard, were deprived; but two years afterwards Agobard was restored, and even regained the confidence of the emperor.

Gregory returned to Rome ill satisfied with the turn which affairs had taken; in fact, he was grievously disappointed at not being permitted to act as umpire between the contending parties, and at finding that he did not hold the balance in his hand so completely as he had wished.

A good understanding between him and the emperor was, however, afterwards restored; so much so that when, in 835, Louis had heard that some officers of his son Lothaire, king of Italy, had plundered certain territories belonging to the Roman Church, he sent an embassy to Lothaire, desiring that he would take the Church under his especial protection.

Louis the Pious died in 840, having embittered his last days by a new division of his empire, which caused his sons again to appear in arms against him. Lothaire ultimately obtained the imperial crown and the kingdom of Italy. It scarcely needs to be remarked that all these commotions tended to weaken the imperial authority at Rome.

Gregory died in 844, and was succeeded by A. D. 844.  
Sergius II.

Sergius II.; who was consecrated without waiting, according to law, for confirmation by the emperor. Lothaire did not overlook this insult, but sent his son Louis, king of Italy, to Rome; who, while he confirmed the election of Sergius, exacted a promise that the elections should be more regularly conducted in future.

But, even here, the pope gained a point; for he took this opportunity to anoint and crown Louis king of the Lombards.

A. D. 846. The Arabians, who had established themselves in Sicily and Calabria, now entered the Tiber with a powerful fleet, penetrated as far as Rome, and plundered St. Peter's church, from which they carried off the altar which had stood over the tombs of the apostles Peter and Paul.

Sergius died in 847. Martinus Polonus, writing in the thirteenth century, affirms that his original name was Os Porci (Pig's Face), that he changed his name on coming to the pontificate, and that the custom was henceforth established by which the pontiffs lay aside their family names on their elevation. Platina says the same: on which Panvini remarks, that we should rather conclude from Anastasius that he had been always called Sergius, or that he had only laid aside the epithet Os Porci, and retained his surname; and that, at all events, John XII., about a hundred years later, was the first pontiff who laid aside his family name. Pagi makes it appear probable that this Sergius has been confounded with Sergius IV., who was pope in 1009, and who had been previously called Os Porci (Pig's Face), or Bucca Porci (Pig's Cheek).

A. D. 847. Upon the death of Sergius, Leo IV. was imme-

Leo IV.

diately elected in his room; but the Romans did not venture to disregard the authority of the emperor as in the case of some other elections. Impressed with a dread of the Saracens, and feeling the presence of a pope to be necessary for the defence of the city, they performed the ceremony of consecration before the confirmation of the emperor could be received; but at the same time they excused themselves on the ground of necessity, and gave assurances of their fidelity, with which the emperor seems to have been satisfied. Leo repaired the walls and fortifications of Rome, and prepared to resist an attack. At the mouth of the Tiber he built two towers, between which he suspended strong chains in such a manner as to preclude the entrance of the smallest vessel. A fleet from Naples, Amalfi, and Gaeta, came to his assistance; and by its aid the Romans succeeded in giving a signal overthrow to the Saracens, near Ostia. This pontiff carried into execution a plan, which had already been devised by Leo III., of building a suburb to Rome, that should enclose the hitherto exposed church of St. Peter, and form an additional defence to the city itself. The emperor and his brothers contributed large sums of money to this undertaking. It was completed in four years, and called, after its founder, *Civitas Leonina*, being consecrated with solemn processions, prayers, and the sprinkling of holy water.

About this time Lothaire associated with himself in the empire his son Louis, king of Italy. In 850 he sent him to Rome, where he was crowned by Leo. But in 855 Louis came suddenly to Rome, enraged at having heard a report of an intention on the part of the Romans to renounce the authority of the Franks, and place themselves under the protection of the

Greeks. The charge, however, upon investigation, appeared to be unfounded. Leo died in the same year, 855. He is said to have been the first pontiff who adopted the royal style of dating his decrees, and other public acts, from the year of his pontificate, instead of the year of Christ. Our king Alfred, when a child of four years old, was sent to Rome by his father Ethelwolf, to receive his education under the auspices of this pontiff.

Fabulous  
Pope Joan.

It was the historical tradition and current belief of many centuries, that Leo IV. had a female successor in the person of the celebrated Pope Joan. We may, however, without hesitation, regard the narrative respecting her as altogether fabulous; but it is impossible to pass it over without some notice, and it may be expedient to give a view of the arguments which exist for and against the credibility of the story.\*

It was said that, about the middle of the ninth century, the lover of a young woman, a native of Mayence, conveyed her, in male attire, to Athens, where she made extraordinary progress in the sciences. In the same dress, and in company with her lover, she went from Athens to Rome, where she delivered lectures with great applause on a course of science (Trivium), and obtained high celebrity for learning and virtue, under the name of John of England (Johannes Anglicus). In 855, she is said to have been unanimously elected pope. At this time being pregnant, and near the time of her delivery, she was seized with the pains of labour in a solemn procession to the church and palace of St. John of Lateran, between the Coliseum and the church of St. Clement. Here she was delivered of a child, which, however,

\* Closely abridged from Schröck, vol. xxii.

died immediately after its birth, and was buried in the same spot. Hence in similar processions the popes always avoid this place, in horror of the event which there transpired; and the name of this female pontiff has been struck out of the list of popes.

This narrative claims to rest upon written authority, and upon monuments of art.

One writer claimed in its favour is the librarian Anastasius, a contemporary, and a violent partisan of the popes. A testimony proceeding from his pen would have great weight; but it appears that, at the utmost, this narrative exists only in some manuscripts of this author, and it is contended that it was foisted into these from the works of Martinus Polonus, a writer of the thirteenth century, and that the interpolation bears evident marks of its more recent origin. Much learned controversy has arisen on this subject; as the result of which it may be stated that the passages in Anastasius cannot be maintained on critical grounds, and that hence the narrative loses the very important support of a contemporary and unexceptionable testimony.

Spanheim thinks that he has discovered a testimony to the existence of Joan in the writings of a monk of Monte Casino, who flourished about thirty years after the pretended event. This monk relates that, in the time of Charlemagne, it was revealed by an evil spirit in a dream to Arichis, prince of Benevento, that the person who then filled the office of patriarch of Constantinople was a female in disguise, which, upon examination, was found to be the fact. It is clear, says Spanheim, that this monkish fable is neither more nor less than an attempt to transfer the disgrace of that which had recently happened at Rome to the

great rival of the Roman pontiff at Constantinople. In point of fact, however, nothing is clear in the case, except that use was made of the pretended interposition of an evil spirit to cast reproach upon the patriarch of Constantinople. It is a mere assumption that the story was suggested by a fact which had happened at Rome.

With greater plausibility, Spanheim appeals to a mention of pope Joan in the writings of another monk, supposed to have lived in the beginning of the tenth century. It has, however, been shown that this writer did not flourish until the middle of the twelfth century; and thus his name is removed from the list of early witnesses.

The story appears, for the first time, in a brief notice of Marianus Scotus, a monk of Fulda, to the effect that, after 854, a female named Joanna succeeded to pope Leo IV., and reigned two years five months and four days. This monk, who lived in Germany more than two hundred years after the date of the alleged event, cannot be considered as a witness. He does not say how or whence he obtained his account. Neither is it quite certain that this passage proceeded from Marianus himself, since there are some copies of his chronicle in which it is wanting. The question as to whether the passage be an interpolation, or whether the omission be an effect of mutilation, has been variously answered according to the different prepossessions of critics. Launoi supposes that the story was invented in the time of Marianus.\* In short, the question has not been accurately determined; but, even if it could be proved that the passage is genuine, the authority of Marianus would not be sufficient to establish the fact.

\* Launoi, lib. 4, Ep. 8.



Later writers can, of course, be regarded only as giving us the substance of the tradition as it existed in their days. About the beginning of the twelfth century, Sigebert, in his chronicles, writes, under the year 854, "The pope John is said to have been a woman, and, having become pregnant by one of her lovers, to have been delivered of a child during her pontificate; whence some do not rank her among the popes." About the middle of the same century, Otho of Freysingen, in his list of the popes, after John VI. at the beginning of the eighth century, inserts John VII., with the addition of "femina." Godfrey of Viterbo, about 1191, inserts in his chronicle "Papissa Johanna non numeratur."

Towards the end of the thirteenth century, the Dominican Martinus Polonus gives the first full account of pope Joan, according to the narrative already related and for some time generally received, and as it was said to have been recorded by Anastasius. Hence Mabillon, and many others, regard him as the first who related the story in all its details, if he did not himself invent it. Others deny that the passage really belongs to his work; they suppose that it is an interpolation made by the enemies of the Church. It is wanting in some manuscripts, but it is found in many others. There is, however, no real reason to doubt its genuineness; for the Dominican Ptolemy de Luca, in his "Ecclesiastical History," written about the year 1312, refers to this passage, saying that "all writers whom he had read place pope Benedict III. immediately after Leo IV.; only Martinus Polonus places between these two Johannem Anglicum VIII." Other attempts to throw discredit upon the authenticity of this passage appear to be insufficient.

From this time, until the beginning of the seventeenth century, the narrative was frequently repeated, and appears to have been generally received without hesitation. Blondel enumerates sixty-six writers of the Church of Rome, between the date of Marianus Scotus and the year 1610, by whom it was mentioned. Spanheim, or rather his translator, L'Enfant,\* reckons one hundred and fifty writers, from 1261 to 1600; including Occam, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, in the fourteenth century, and, in the fifteenth, Theodoric of Niem, Gerson, Æneas Sylvius, and Platina. The two latter writers appear to have been the first who suggested any doubt as to this history.

From all this it appears that there is no contemporary witness of the fact (the passage in Anastasius being probably spurious); but that the story is very ancient, and was for a long time generally believed in Rome and throughout the West,—so much so that (as Blondel remarks) the pope John, elected in 1276, took the title of John XXI., whereas he would only have been John XX., if the pretended pontiff had been omitted.

As to monuments. Theodoric of Niem, papal secretary about the beginning of the fifteenth century, affirms that he saw a statue to the memory of pope Joan at Rome. This is said to have been destroyed towards the end of the sixteenth century, by an order from the pope. In the principal church of Siena, among the statues of popes, there was also one of pope Joan, which Launoi asserts that he himself saw in 1634.† In 1686, Mabillon could not find it there;

\* Histoire de la Papesse Jeanne, tom. ii, pp. 156—234.

† Launoi. Diss. De Auctoritate Negantis Argumenti adversus Thiersium, Opp. T. ii. P. 1. pp. 67, 68.

but he afterwards learnt that, by command of Clement VIII., the female features on that statue had been changed into those of a male, and the name Zacharias affixed to the statue. The elder Pagi\* says that he was shown the spot on which this statue stood until Alexander VII. ordered it to be removed. Bishop Burnet says that he saw a statue of pope Joan at a public place in Bologna, among other statues of popes; but some suppose that the statue to which he refers was that of Nicholas IV.

These monuments merely prove that the narrative had gained credence, as above stated, perhaps from the thirteenth century.

As to the probability of the circumstance, Launoi does not deny it,† and Blondel expressly admits it.‡ But all speculations on this question are of exceedingly little value.

There are, however, some substantial arguments against the credibility of the story. Leo IX., in an epistle written to Michael, patriarch of Constantinople, A.D. 1053, speaks of it as a rumour utterly incredible, that there had been eunuchs holding the office of that patriarchate; and it is not likely (as Blondel says) that he would have ventured to write in the terms which he did employ, if there had ever been a female pontiff at Rome, although rejected and denounced. Not only is there no contemporary witness (as has been already said), but the history is virtually contradicted by very respectable contemporaries, who, although they do not expressly deny it, or even refer to it, yet say things which are inconsistent with it. Ado, archbishop of Vienne from 859, expressly relates that

\* Crit. in Ann. Baron. ad an. 855, n. 17.

† Launoi, l. c.

‡ De Joanna Papissa, pp. 66, 67.

Benedict III. ascended the apostolic chair after Leo IV. More decisively still, Hinemar, archbishop of Rheims, in an epistle addressed to Nicholas I., in the year 866, speaks of certain ambassadors going to Rome, who heard on their way that Leo IV. was dead, and on their arrival found the new pope Benedict III. There exists, also, chronological proof that Benedict III. was pope in the same year in which Leo IV. died (A.D. 855).

But what was the origin of this fable? It has been traced, with much probability, to the circumstance that during a great part of the tenth century, in the course of which there were several popes called John, the pontiffs were under the influence of licentious females, who, in fact, often placed their friends, paramours, or illegitimate children, in the papal chair. Blondel traces the tradition to the single fact that Marozia, the infamous daughter of Theodora, made her illegitimate son pope, under the title of John II. On the whole, the probability is that this long duration of undue female influence gave rise to the saying that a woman was pope, or that the papal chair was filled by a woman. Nor is it fatal to this supposition, that a saying which arose out of the disorders of the tenth century should allude to an event as having taken place in the ninth: this may have been accidental, or it may have been designed. The conjecture of Baronius\* is, that the saying arose from the weak and womanly conduct of pope John VIII. (who ascended the chair in 872), with reference to the patriarch Photius. But this conjecture is without any historical foundation. It is true that an anonymous writer of the thirteenth century says of this pope that

\* Baron. ad an. 879, n. 5.

he was no better than a woman, and that he did not deserve to be mentioned among the popes; but this merely proves that this writer thought that he had discovered pope Joan in him. Other conjectures do not deserve notice.

It is curious that some modern Roman Catholic writers, including even Benedict XIV., have spoken of this fable as an invention of the Lutherans;—a fable which, as we have seen, was manifestly rife in the Church long before Luther was born.

Leo was succeeded by Benedict III., in 855, after some opposition from a rival, Anastasius, who was chosen by the Roman people, but over whom he finally prevailed by the support of the bishops and clergy. He was consecrated in presence of the imperial ambassador, and received his confirmation at his hands.

A. D. 855.  
Benedict  
III.

During his pontificate, Ethelwolf, king of England, went on a pilgrimage to Rome. He presented to St. Peter a golden crown, weighing four pounds, and other valuable offerings; made rich presents to the clergy, the nobles, and the people; promised an annual payment to the pope; and rebuilt the English school at Rome, which had been destroyed by fire.

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We have now arrived at an epoch in the history of the Church which calls for a further review of the progress of ecclesiastical power and the steps of the papacy; demanding especial attention to the constitution of the Church in the new Christian states of Europe,—the means by which the Churches were brought into subjection to Rome,—and the extent to which this submission had proceeded by the middle of the ninth century.

During the fifth and sixth centuries, four new kingdoms arose upon the ruins of the western portion of the Roman empire, which attained to the condition of permanent Christian states, involving, to a great extent, the fortunes and history of the Church. These were the kingdoms of the Visigoths in Spain, the Franks in Gaul, the Anglo-Saxons in Britain, and the Lombards in Italy.

For the most part, these hordes of barbarians found Christianity established in the regions which they overran, and adopted this religion as their own. But the circumstances under which this adoption was made varied in different countries; and this difference had an effect upon the ecclesiastical constitution of the several kingdoms.

The foundation of the kingdom of the Visigoths in Spain dates from the middle of the fifth century (A.D. 456), after the temporary occupation of that country by the Vandals, Sueves, and Burgundians. When the Goths first settled in Spain they were already, to a certain extent, Christians; indeed, even at their first irruption into Western Europe, they not only had some knowledge of Christianity, and some regard for its institutions, but many of them had been baptized, and were nominally (although but little more) Christians.\* For the most part, these converted Goths had little conception of Christianity beyond the form of baptism and the Christian name; but, so far as they had any doctrinal views, they were Arians, and as such they settled in Gaul and Spain. When

\* Concerning the conversion of the Goths by Ulphilas, &c., see Sozomen, H. E. 6, 37; Socrates, H. E. 4, 33; Theodoret, H. E. 4, 37; Philostorg H. E. 2, 5. The tribe amongst which Ulphilas chiefly laboured did not join in the descent upon Italy. Ulphilas was Semi-Arian.

they were mingled among the orthodox, they were, however, little disposed to make any opposition to them on account of the difference of their tenets; their ignorance and apathy, rather than any enlightened principles of toleration, rendering them indifferent on these matters. Towards the end of the sixth century, almost all the Goths in Spain had abandoned Arianism, and their king Recared publicly adopted the Catholic faith.

The Franks, like the Goths, had obtained some knowledge of Christianity from their intercourse with the Christian empire, before their irruption into Western Europe; but we do not find that any profession of Christianity had existed among them. They obtained a settlement in Gaul, under Clovis, in the latter part of the fifth century and the beginning of the sixth; and it was during this period of conquest that they conformed to the established religion of the country,—a conformity which is probably to be traced, in a great measure, to motives of polity or expedience, since Clovis may easily have perceived that the Franks and Gauls would never combine into one nation as long as they were not united among themselves concerning matters of religion. The professed conversion of Clovis took place on his return from the war against the Alemanni, in 496, after the aid which he was said to have attributed to the God of the Christians in the battle of Zülpiéh. But it may be observed that he manifested a favourable disposition towards Christianity at the first moment of his invasion of Gaul; he left the bishops in undisturbed possession of their sees and their property, and suffered the whole constitution of the Church to remain intact; he married a Christian princess (niece of the Burgundian

king), and suffered his first-born child to be baptized, before he made any avowal of Christian principle. The probability is, therefore, that from the first he determined that Christianity should be the national religion, but resolved also not to precipitate his measures, out of respect to his heathen Franks. This sovereign adopted, not Arianism, but orthodox Christianity, as he found it already established in the country. It is probable, also, that in taking this measure he may have contemplated something more than immediate convenience; he may have looked upon it as eventually furnishing a pretext for war upon the Arian Goths and Burgundians, who still occupied a part of Gaul; certain, at least, it is that he afterwards made use of this difference of religion as a pretext in exciting his Franks to attack the Goths.\* Before the end of the sixth century, the new kingdom of the Franks in Gaul was entirely Christian, the cases of remaining heathenism being only exceptional and individual.

The history of the introduction of Christianity among the Lombards is exceedingly obscure; it is, in fact, unknown, and there is hardly room for conjecture on the subject. This people, probably of Scandinavian origin, settled on the banks of the Oder and the Elbe in the second century; and at the beginning of the sixth they gradually moved southwards, towards the banks of the Danube. At the invitation of Justinian, they crossed the Danube, and carried on successfully a war of extermination against the Gepidæ. They afterwards resolved on the invasion of Italy, which they accomplished under Alboin in the year 567; and before the end of the century they were masters of

\* Greg. Turon. 2, 37.



all the country, except the exarchate of Ravenna, Rome and its environs, and the Neapolitan territory; the chief seat of the new kingdom being established at Pavia.

The Lombards, at the time of their conquest of Italy, as the Visigoths when they conquered Spain, were professedly Arians; and hence it has been thought probable that they originally received their Christianity, such as it was, from Gothic instructors. After no great lapse of time, however, the orthodox faith was embraced by the greater part of the Lombard nobility and people, under queen Theodelinde and her son Adelwald; and although two Arian kings followed after the death of Adelwald, still Arianism continued to decline throughout the nation.

There can be no doubt that Christianity was introduced into Britain as early as the second century, probably from Gaul; and that, in the course of the fourth century, it was extensively established under the Roman dominion. This country became independent of Rome in 409; forty years afterwards (A.D. 449), the British king Vortigern, finding himself too weak to resist the invasion of the warlike Caledonians, called in the Saxons to his aid; and their arrival, together with that of Jutes and Angles, soon led to the formation of the Saxon heptarchy. Unlike the people who had overrun other portions of Europe, these barbarians appear to have been heathen, totally unacquainted with Christianity, and disposed rather to overthrow than to adopt the established religion of the country they had overrun. And such was the success of their pagan zeal that, as we have already seen, in the course of a century after their possession of this island, no more than a few vestiges of Christi-

anity remained; the chief hold of this religion being among a small number of the natives, who had retired into the mountains of North Wales, and there continued to retain their faith and worship, under their own bishops, and holding their own synods, isolated from the rest of Christendom. In the case of other European countries, the object of the invaders was to incorporate themselves with the nation; and their immediate enemy was, not the population of the country, but the power of the Roman empire: but in Britain the object of the invaders was the extermination of the natives, in order that they might themselves entirely occupy the country. Hence their leaders could perceive no advantage in adopting the religion of the country, but just the contrary; they aimed, consistently enough, at destroying and supplanting it as well as everything else connected with the British name.

After the lapse of a century and a half, this cause of opposition no longer remained to the Saxons, who were then in undisputed possession of the country; and when, at the end of the sixth century, the monk Augustine was sent to England by pope Gregory the Great, they were found accessible to argument in favour of the Christian faith, the way having probably been prepared by a Christian princess, Bertha, wife of Ethelbert, king of Kent, and daughter of Charibert, king of Paris. The work of conversion among the Anglo-Saxons proceeded rapidly: after the baptism of Ethelbert, Augustine established several bishoprics, and found himself in the actual exercise of that metropolitan authority with which he had been invested by Gregory. Before the dissolution of the heptarchy the whole island was Christian.

The northern invaders were not likely to regard the existing ecclesiastical institutions and ceremonies in any other light than as an integral part of Christianity itself. They received the form of Church polity, no less than Christian doctrine, merely by tradition. Accordingly, if we compare the ecclesiastical constitution and condition of these Churches with those of the Churches of the old Roman empire, we find the same distance between the clergy and laity, and the same subjection of the latter to the former,—the same organization of the clergy, with its system of hierarchical subordination,—the same laws relating to clerical celibacy (which, however, were extensively evaded in practice),—the same parochial, diocesan, and metropolitan relations, with the exception of some slight variations arising from local and temporary circumstances, especially from the admixture of Arian and orthodox in Italy and Spain.

At the same time the relations of Church and State in these new kingdoms differed in some important particulars from those which subsisted under the Byzantine empire. The Church was here more dependent on the State; for not only, in point of fact, did the bishops feel themselves constrained to render a more implicit obedience to the sovereign, but these sovereigns took care, at the very foundation of the constitutions which were established in their respective countries, to secure to themselves a legal and recognised influence in the government of the Church to a much greater extent than had recently existed.

1. Under the immediate successors of Clovis it became law that no bishop throughout Gaul should be appointed without permission and approbation of the king; a more universal and absolute interference than

the emperors had ever attempted. Perhaps, even in the reign of Clovis, there were cases in which the king either directly nominated the bishops, or gave a recommendation which was equivalent to a command respecting the party to be elected. Thus Theodoric, the third son of Clovis, in the year 529, nominated Nicetius to the bishopric of Treves, to which, however, it appears that the nominee was not admitted without the consent of the people. In 549, a Council of Orleans decreed\* that no bishopric should be sold, but that bishops should be appointed by the choice of the people and the clergy, only according to the will of the sovereign. It appears that before this time nominations to bishoprics had been sold, even by sovereign princes. Some weak attempts were made, during this period, by the Gallican bishops, to restore the freedom of election, and to withdraw it from the influence of the civil power, but with so little effect, that before long the very form of an election of bishops had disappeared. This form was indeed restored by Charlemagne, but only under the same conditions as those which had been imposed by the Merovingian kings; and it may be questioned if even this law was ever carried into practice, for not long after its enactment we find the sees of Germany and France filled by the mere nomination of the emperor or king.

Under the first orthodox sovereigns of Spain the bishops formally recognised the right of the king to confirm episcopal appointments; † and, without doubt, the case was the same among the Lombards. In England it was soon established, as a rule, that the

\* Conc. Aurelian., A. D. 549, Can. 10.

† Conc. Toled., A. D. 681, Can. 6.

election of a bishop could take place only in the presence of the king,—a provision by which it was made very certain that none would be elected contrary to his will. In 692, indeed, king William disclaimed the right of appointing bishops, which he declared to belong only to the archbishop. But before the ninth century the English bishops were usually nominated by the crown.

It is evident that this exercise of regal authority in the choice of bishops contributed to make the Church more dependent on the State than if the power of election had been, in any measure, vested in itself.

2. Another way in which the kings of the new western states exercised a direct influence upon the Church was their control over its synodal action; the bishops not being permitted to assemble in council without consent of the sovereign, and the acts of their councils being invalid without the royal confirmation. It was the custom of these sovereigns to summon the bishops, together with the nobles, to the general councils of the nation; and in these councils were discussed matters relating to the Church as well as to the State, partly perhaps because the presence of the bishops gave opportunity for such discussions, and partly also because matters ecclesiastical were regarded equally with any others as partaking of a national character. Hence, towards the end of the sixth century, provincial synods began to fall into disuse, the business proper to them being transacted in the national assemblies. At the same time, from the part which the sovereigns acted with reference to the synods of the Church, it came to be established as a maxim that the head of the State was over all causes,

ecclesiastical as well as civil, within his dominions, supreme. It was the usual practice that application should be made to the sovereign to convene synods; but sometimes he convened them of his own accord.

The preambles to the acts of these synods often declare the fact of their being assembled by royal permission.\*

Charlemagne divided the National Council into two chambers or benches, assigning to the spiritual chamber (the bishops) matters relating to the Church, and affairs of State to the secular. This mode of conducting business appears to have been adopted first in an assembly at Mayence A.D. 813; and the system was finally established by Louis I.

From the year 586, in which Recared embraced the orthodox faith, we find that himself and his successors were always present at Spanish synods; probably with the design of giving political influence to the bishops rather than with a view of restricting their power. Mere matters of state were sometimes decided in ecclesiastical synods, in which the laity took no part; and in the great assemblies of the nation the laity were not permitted to take the same part in ecclesiastical matters as the bishops did in civil. An arrangement to this effect was made in Spain at even an earlier date than in France, and one more advantageous to the Church than the law of Charlemagne; for, in 694, at one of these general assemblies a law was passed, that, in future, ecclesiastical matters should be discussed during the first three days by the spiritual estate alone, and afterwards secular affairs should be settled by both estates com-

\* *E. g.* Councils of Clermont, 535; Paris, 555; Tours, 567; Valence, 584; Maçon, 585; Paris, 615.

bined. The councils of the Anglo-Saxon Church in England present the same features as those of France and Spain. So that in all the new Christian kingdoms of the West the temporal sovereign took part in the government of the Church, and even in ecclesiastical legislation,—a part which was distinctly recognised as regular and constitutional. And it often happened, especially in France, that the will and interference of the king prevailed against the wishes of the bishops in the arrangement of Church matters.

In France certain of the clergy were formally and strictly attached to the court, the chief of whom was, in fact, the king's minister of religion, always near his person, and influenced by his will. In England, on the contrary, the kings were in the habit of employing the archbishops of Canterbury as their ministers of state; and nowhere had the civil power so little influence over the Church as in this country.

3. In these new states the clergy found it impossible to retain all the privileges and immunities that had belonged to their order under the old Roman empire, especially those which related to their own persons and property. Thus it was with respect to exemption from military service. At first this exemption was retained, but on the same condition as formerly, namely, that no person liable to be called on for military service should be eligible for ordination. In the Roman empire, however, only certain classes of the citizens were thus liable; but in the new Western kingdoms this liability attached to all freemen, and hence no person could be ordained without consent of the king. As a result of this state of things, the greater part of the Franco-Gallie clergy in the eighth century were men who originally belonged

to the servile class. To remedy this evil, the Church sought to do away the restrictive law which was found to have so unfavourable an operation ; and, while this object was attained, the privilege of exemption was also lost, even with respect to the bishops.

In these kingdoms, the exemption of the clergy from civil jurisdiction was also restricted, in civil matters, to causes in which both parties were ecclesiastics, and in criminal cases, to ecclesiastical offences alone ; the only modification of this rule which the clergy could obtain in their favour being that civil causes between clergy and laity should be tried by an ecclesiastical judge in conjunction with the civil, until the synod of Paris, A.D. 615, when the royal assent was given to the law that, even in criminal causes, the trials of the clergy should be conducted by a civil judge with an ecclesiastical judge as his assessor. But during the changes which took place in France, under Pepin and Charlemagne, the bishops found means to bring the offences of the clergy under their sole jurisdiction. And not long afterwards the bishops obtained some measure of civil jurisdiction under the Frankish monarchy. In the other kingdoms the old principle remained in force, that the clergy were as responsible as laymen to the civil tribunal for civil offences ; except that in England it was the custom for a deputy or officer from the bishop's court to be present whenever an ecclesiastic was thus placed on trial, a custom which continued until the twelfth century.

The sovereigns of these states exercised judicial authority over the bishops ; and possessed an appellate jurisdiction whereby they could reverse the sentence of synods concerning them.



4. The immunities of Church property, no less than the personal privileges of the clergy, suffered a diminution in the new states of Europe. But the invaders of Spain, Gaul, and Italy appear to have respected the landed property of the Church wherever they came; and if any of its moveable property was destroyed or carried off in the recklessness of plunder, it is probable that it was speedily restored in full value. In addition, large presents were made to the Church by Clovis and his successors. The new proselytes were taught that by alms to the Church they would obtain not only the fulfilment of their wishes and an answer to their prayers, but also the forgiveness of their sins. The latter promise especially was well adapted to call forth their utmost liberality; and, accordingly, in the deeds of gift which date from the sixth century we usually find that donations to the Church are made especially “*pro requie animarum,*” or “*pro remissione—redemptione—peccatorum.*” Hence donations were often made in the form of bequests; and so numerous and mischievous had those bequests become towards the end of the sixth century, that Chilperic caused all wills to be declared invalid in which any property was devised to the Church; a law which, however, was afterwards repealed by Guntram. In order to secure possession of these donations to the Church, it was not unusual to insert in the deed of conveyance the most tremendous anathemas against any who should afterwards at any time attempt to disturb that possession.\*

The mass of Church property, as to legal right, according to the intention of the donors, was therefore continually increasing; but it was less secure than it

\* See Baron. ad an. 761.

had been formerly. Notwithstanding all precautions, the Church was perpetually a prey to the spirit of these unsettled and lawless times, and probably lost more by plunder than it gained by donations and bequests, especially during the sixth and seventh centuries, among the Franks in Gaul, and the Lombards in Italy. Hence the multiplication of laws against Church robbers,\* and the propagation of marvellous stories concerning the punishment with which sacrilege was visited. It appears also that the sovereigns themselves not unfrequently laid their hands upon Church property, under various pretences.

At the same time the State made considerable claims upon the Church in respect of the property which it held. It appears that, for the most part, the same tribute was exacted from ecclesiastical property as from all other; although the Church was not without some particular immunities in this respect, together with exemption from taxation in other forms. Sometimes, also, large demands were made upon the available income of the Church in the shape of war-taxes, or for other extraordinary purposes.

Thus far the Church appears to have been at this time on a less advantageous footing with relation to the State in the West than in the East.

5. On the other hand, however, we find that in the Western kingdoms the bishops took an active and leading part in all affairs of State, and had precedence of the nobles. In the acts of some English synods of the eighth century, the name of the archbishop of Canterbury is put before that of the king. Perhaps this importance was conceded to ecclesiastical dignitaries of the

\* *E. g.* Synod of Tours, A. D. 570.

Church, in order that the influence of religion might be enlisted on the side of the civil government, for the establishment of its authority in those unsettled times; or, probably, it was granted to them as being the more learned body, and more capable than the ruder nobles of transacting business of state. At all events, the political influence thus acquired by the bishops was more than sufficient to compensate for the loss they had sustained by the interference of the king in ecclesiastical legislation and government.

The bishops now shared with the nobility the right of electing the sovereign. In Spain, this was settled by several Councils of Toledo,\* in the last of which the bishops are named before the nobles, as electors of the king. In England the bishops acquired this privilege somewhat later. In 785 two large synods were assembled under Offa, king of Mercia, and Alfwold, king of Northumberland, by which, in the presence of two legates from pope Adrian I., it was decreed that the Anglo-Saxon kingdom should be elective, and that the king should be chosen only by the bishops and nobility. The influence of the bishops in the choice and deposition of the kings of France was, on several occasions, strikingly manifest; and the tone of language employed by these sovereigns towards their episcopal subjects became singularly respectful and submissive.

The right of the Church to give protection to criminals who took refuge in sacred places from the power of the law (*jus asyli*), which was originally transferred to Christian places of worship from the old heathen temples, had been considerably circumscribed in the Roman empire, and reduced to a right

\* Conc. Toletan. A. D. 633, c. 75; A. D. 636, c. 3; A. D. 638, c. 3; A. D. 653, c. 10.

of intercession, or plea in mitigation of judgment. But in the new kingdoms of the West this privilege was recognised and exercised in almost its pristine vigour, although still not without some limitations.\* After the death of Charlemagne the power of the Church in this respect continually increased;—a most popular prerogative, the very possession of which, and much more the difficulties with which the Church sometimes contended in order to bring it into exercise, could not fail to exalt the bishops in the estimation of the people, as if they were their friends and guardians, affording them security against the oppression of the more powerful classes of society. Nor can it be doubted that this privilege of asylum must have been in many cases a source of pecuniary profit. If sometimes the exercise of this right may have impeded the course of strict justice, it was perhaps still more often employed, in those lawless and unsettled times, to protect the oppressed against injustice and tyranny.

Besides this, in Gaul, and in Spain, the bishops were invested with no inconsiderable power, in the shape of a control and oversight of the administration of justice by the inferior magistrates. And it is not surprising that in the seventh and eighth centuries we find bishops exercising municipal authority and possessing civil power within the limits of their cathedral cities. By a law of Charlemagne, bishops were empowered to take cognisance of causes which were referred to their jurisdiction by one of the litigant parties, even against the will of the adverse party in the suit; a power not extended to bishops elsewhere.

At the same time, in these western states, the

\* Capitul. tom. i. p. 58; Conc. Matiscon. 2, A. D. 578, can. 8; Capitulare, Ann. 779, c. 8; Greg. Tur. lib. 4, c. 18.

spiritual jurisdiction of the bishops, in matters relating to religious faith, doctrine, or worship, to matrimony, and to wills, was more exclusive and complete than it had been in earlier times, or than it continued to be within the limits of the empire. The western sovereigns did not find themselves either entitled or qualified to enact the part of a Justinian in publishing religious edicts, regulating the doctrine of the Church by cabinet orders, and pronouncing decisions concerning orthodoxy and heresy. They were disposed rather to submit their own faith very humbly to the judgment of the bishops, and even to insert a clause in their coronation-oath binding themselves to employ their whole power in defence of orthodoxy, and for the extermination of its enemies. Indeed, it was the prevailing sentiment of the day, with hardly an exception, that Christianity consisted in believing what the Church believed, and in practising what it prescribed; in other words, it was supposed that the Church, *i. e.* the bishops, possessed the inalienable right of prescribing all matters of Christian faith and practice. Only, in the seventh century, the English bishops had some difficulty in bringing off the ancient British Christians from the celebration of Easter on what the Church regarded as a wrong day. At the close of the eighth century the Gallican bishops were a little troubled by the peculiar opinions of Felix and Elipandus, and by the obstinacy of Gottschalk. In the same century, the pope Zacharias found also a heresy deserving condemnation in the opinion of the priest Virgilius that the earth is round, and that it is probably inhabited and lighted by sun and moon at the antipodes.\*

\* Zachariæ Ep. 10 (Labbe).

In these states the bishops possessed also a more exclusive cognisance of ecclesiastical causes than elsewhere. Among the barbarians, before the introduction of Christianity, there appears to have been little or no legislation respecting matrimony; so that all laws and regulations on this matter were now regarded as emanating simply from the Church, and all that related to it was considered as falling entirely under its jurisdiction. Hence, in these kingdoms, the Church had no obstacle to contend with, such as it found in the Roman empire, where marriage, as a civil institution, had long been regulated by a code of laws.

In nearly the same way the control of testamentary matters, as something more or less foreign from the habits of the new settlers, was willingly conceded to those who were already well versed in them, and were able to enter into the disputes and perplexing questions which often arose out of the interpretation and administration of wills. Since few of the laity were able even to write, wills were composed by spiritual notaries; and all suits in connection with them were referred to the spiritual courts. Scarcely a will was made which did not contain some pious bequest to the Church.

It must, however, be remarked that the Church was not supported by the State in the execution of its laws and regulations respecting matrimony; and these laws were openly violated even by many of the sovereigns of these kingdoms. This difficulty was overcome in course of time, not by relaxation, which Boniface advised in Germany with regard to some of the prohibitions,\* but by perseverance and repeated assertion of the Church's claim to legislate.

\* Zacharie Ep. 1 (Labbe).

6. As to the exercise of penitential discipline, it was only by degrees that the rude people who had overrun the west of Europe could be brought to appreciate the doctrines and notions which it involved, and to submit to the impositions prescribed. At first, perhaps, for more than half a century, the Church found it unadvisable, or even impossible, to extend its criminal jurisdiction beyond the cognisance of open and notorious crimes; and it was long before the clergy could induce their converts to make voluntary confession of sins (*peccata privata*). The Church, however, soon found means to bring into more efficient operation its power of inflicting penance, and to make itself respected in its assumed character of the dispenser of divine punishments. The doctrine of purgatory, which now began to gain ground, was well adapted to influence the minds of the newly-made converts; and many were brought to voluntary confession at the tribunal of penance, and made willing to undergo the penalties imposed, with a view to escape the imaginary torments of this fictitious state, who would not have been otherwise induced to comply with the requirements of the Church. Besides this, a system of commutation was introduced, by which certain acts of penance could be exchanged for others more practicable, or better suited to the circumstances of the penitents, or even for money; a system which was afterwards carried to perfection in the sale of indulgences. All this involved no relaxation or mitigation of the penitential discipline; it tended, in fact, to make it more stringent and minute.

We should take only a hasty and superficial view of the matter, and, in fact, should make a charge more

or less unfounded and unjust, if we were to ascribe the origin of this commutation of acts of penance for payment in money simply to the cupidity of churchmen, or the design of obtaining money as a means of influence. It is probable that this system was at first suggested to the Church, or forced upon it; that it was not invented by ecclesiastics, but rather tolerated as necessary, or endured as unavoidable. Among the northern tribes, and especially the Franks, it was a long-established principle of jurisprudence that every crime against society, or against individuals, and consequently every violation of another's rights, could and even ought to be atoned for by money. This was a fundamental principle of their public and private administration of justice before they became acquainted with Christianity: their whole criminal code being founded upon the maxim that only those penalties were reasonable and sufficient by which at once reparation was made to the injured party, and suffering or loss inflicted upon the perpetrator of the injury. They had also already imbibed the idea that society was justified in demanding satisfaction for injury inflicted upon individuals; and, therefore, one-half of the fine was payable to the state, and the other half to the injured party. Hence, therefore, a transition to the idea that offences against the laws of the Church, and sins against that Deity with whom they had now become acquainted, could be atoned for in the way of pecuniary mulct, was not only easy, but to a certain extent obvious and likely; indeed, as far as their own ideas went, these new converts may have supposed it impossible that they could be secure from future punishment by any other means than the payment of a fine.



The Church does not appear to have grasped at this principle with eagerness or haste ; on the contrary, the expedient at first adopted was rather to combine the payment of a fine with the performance of some act of penance, in favour of those persons who appear to have thought that the latter could not avail without the former.\*

And during this whole period we scarcely, if at all, find an instance in which the Church appropriated to its own use the money received by way of fine in lieu of, or in addition to, an act of penance : such sums were given to the poor, and that too by the penitent himself ; the payment being merely prescribed and charged upon his own conscience. It cannot, however, be a matter of surprise that in course of time the Church turned to its own advantage the popular opinion concerning the commutation of punishment with money, which was thus forced upon its notice.

During this period the sentence of excommunication was but rarely and sparingly pronounced against people who could not theoretically understand the greatness of the spiritual evil supposed to be attached to such a sentence. But, at the same time, the people were being instructed in this matter ; and the bishops found means to attach temporal disgrace and loss to their sentence, men being required to shun the society of a person excommunicated, as if infected with pestilence or leprosy. Sentence of excommunication was sometimes pronounced against kings, but with little or no effect, being disregarded alike by princes and by their subjects.

It had been the practice of the ancient Church, that penitents should be removed from full commu-

\* English Synod at Cloveshoo, A. D. 747, can. 26.

nion during a certain period before absolution. This separation, which would have been lightly esteemed, even if enforced, was now prudently dispensed with, and a custom was introduced of granting absolution immediately upon confession, on condition of certain acts of penance to be afterwards performed. By this means men, even of the highest rank, were reconciled to the exercise of penitential discipline, and were induced to consent that the Church should take cognisance of their sins. The minds of the newly-acquired converts were thus accustomed to the idea of penitential discipline gradually, and in a mild form ; and by this means the way was prepared for a future exercise of this power on a larger and more imposing scale.

By these methods the Church gradually acquired a great influence over the State ; and a way was being prepared for the eventual subordination of the State, and its subjugation under ecclesiastical dominion.

It is evident that the Church exerted a beneficial influence over all classes of men in these newly-formed states ; not merely by the opinions which it propagated among them, or the religion it conveyed to them, but also by its external institutions, its laws and discipline. And to some persons it appears that the Church, by these means, introduced a moral cultivation in the only way and measure which was possible under existing circumstances. Amid the prevailing want of intellectual culture, and in their undisciplined condition, the people were not able to appreciate and receive Christianity in its purity and completeness. But by the new form of an outward ceremonial, which worked upon their imagination, and by the new authority of a Church which rather prescribed laws than taught doctrines, and gave men

less occasion to think than to act, these feelings could be excited and cherished which, at length, might be matured into moral and religious principle. And this, say some, was the only way by which their mental culture could be eventually promoted.

At the same time the Church, with its hierarchy and institutions, had a favourable influence upon the laws and polity of the newly-settled states, introducing principles of humanity and subordination, tending to break the despotism of the rulers, and to accustom men to habits of peace, and settled residence. The Church also contributed not a little to the stability of the Throne: it was now no longer so easy as formerly for a prince to be put to death, or deposed suddenly, by a violent usurper; a sovereign with whom the bishops were satisfied was greatly strengthened by their political and religious influence among all classes of the people. He was now regarded as the anointed of the Lord; and any who should seek to displace him were obliged to have respect, not only to the individual, but to those who had anointed him. And, if the Church did not conceive the idea of a general emancipation of slaves, or the abolition of slavery, it often interfered for the protection of the individual slave, or the lightening of his burden, pleading that he ought to be regarded and treated as a man. The Church, as well as other landed proprietors, possessed slaves; and the spirit of the time was not likely to conceive the idea of emancipation. But the first idea of emancipation was expressed by a monk.\* The Church was also driven, by the law concerning freemen, to educate some of the slaves which it possessed on its own estates, and

\* See Baron. ad an. 826, n. 56.

ordain them to sacred offices ; and although it appears that for a long time those who were ordained as slaves continued to be regarded as the property of the church to which they belonged, still it is evident that a practice such as this tended materially to the advantage of the whole servile class. It could not but add credit to the condition of a slave that he was capable of becoming a presbyter, or even a bishop ; and besides this, those slaves who were admitted into the priesthood probably exerted more or less influence in favour of the whole order. The Church also encouraged the liberation of slaves, by holding it out as an act of merit, “*pro redemptione animæ.*”

Having thus far noticed the relations of Church and State in the new kingdoms of Western Europe, we may turn our attention to some peculiarities which were now developed in the internal constitution of the Churches themselves.

I. And here we may observe, in the first place, that, during a considerable period after the formation of the new European States, the power of the bishops over the Church in general, and especially over the clergy of each particular Church, was more unlimited and despotic than it had ever been under the ancient constitution. The bishops had, indeed, even then made great addition to their influence and authority, and the constitution of the Church had become more monarchical than in primitive times ; yet still there were limits to that power which the bishops were obliged, and generally speaking were not unwilling, to observe. But, in the times and countries now under review, we find that presbyters and deacons were regarded merely as the subordinates, the servants, or

almost the slaves, of the bishops: in the legends of these times we find scarcely mention of a saint who was not either a bishop or an abbot; and, whenever we read of the inferior order of the clergy, they appear almost entirely as the mere staff or retinue of their episcopal masters. It is a circumstance full of significance that a Council of Braga made a law against the infliction of corporal chastisement by bishops upon presbyters.\*

Several circumstances contributed to this increase of episcopal power. 1. The bishops were now more independent than formerly. Under the ancient constitution, when any one, whether ecclesiastic or layman, experienced harsh or tyrannical treatment at the hands of a bishop, he could appeal to the metropolitan, or to the provincial council. But in the new Gallo-Frankish and Spanish-Gothic Churches the metropolitan system was from the first very greatly relaxed. In the Frankish monarchy, throughout the seventh century, metropolitans were scarcely heard of; and during the same period provincial councils had so far fallen into disuse that there appears not to have been one convened for the space of eighty years. So that there was no power in the Church to set limits to the despotism of the bishops; and, after the lapse of a century, men seem to have forgotten that things had ever been otherwise. Under these circumstances there could be only an appeal to the king, which was often difficult and even impossible.—2. Besides this, the bishops were not, as formerly, elected by the clergy; but, as we have already seen, they were nominated and appointed by the sovereign. And thus one great means of moderating their system of rule was done

\* A. D. 675; Conc. Bracar. 4, can. 7.

away.—3. And yet, further, it was unusual for the sovereign to select bishops from among the clergy of the diocese over which they were appointed to preside. The most important sees were, in fact, bestowed upon the court clergy, upon persons recommended by some powerful noble, or upon those who had rendered some service to the king, or who could otherwise present some valuable consideration. Hence the new bishops and their clergy were strangers to each other; and the very commencement of their connection was signalled by distance or reserve, which was often matured into feelings of hostility.—4. To all these causes must be added the increased political influence of the bishops, and the rank they took with the nobles in acts of legislation and government. The bishops were respected as temporal lords more than in their capacity of chief rulers of the Church. The men of that day thought more of one who sat in the councils of the prince, and gave his vote in the national assemblies before dukes and counts, than of ecclesiastics who could exercise even the highest pontifical acts. And it must be remembered that in these high temporal matters the bishop always acted alone and by his own right; no presbyter or deacon assisted him, or was conjoined with him in any way whatever. It is evident that this circumstance tended to create a great gulf of separation between the bishops and all other orders of the clergy.—5. Lastly, from the beginning of the seventh century, the clergy of most of the Churches in Gaul, Germany, and Spain were elected from the lower orders of the people, and partly consisted (as has been already said) of slaves. So that, under all these circumstances, it is not surprising that in these countries the clergy came to be regarded and

treated as the mere vassals of the bishops.—Towards the end of this period, however, some limits were set to episcopal power.

II. It is also to be observed that in these kingdoms the Church was more universally possessed of landed property than under the old Roman empire. It was observed as a principle from the very first that no new church should be founded without an adequate endowment: whereas under the empire this practice was not made binding by law until the sixth century;\* so that doubtless there were many Churches of the fourth century, and even of the fifth, which were still dependent upon the voluntary principle, without any endowment. But in the new states it was soon made a law that no church should be built without being provided with a sufficient endowment, secured on the land.† And it rested with the bishop of the diocese to determine the sufficiency of a proposed endowment.‡ Hence the majority of the Churches of the West were richer than those of the East, with the exception of such large Churches as those of Constantinople, Alexandria, Ephesus, and Jerusalem.

It should be remembered that, in those times and countries, it was in many cases more easy to endow the Church with land than to present it with any considerable sums of money. Large proprietors often possessed more land than they could cultivate; while estates were sometimes rendered of little value by the decrease or abstraction of slave labour. And Church property in the West, being thus to so great an extent in land,

\* First by Justinian, Nov. 67, c. 3 (A. D. 538).

† Conc. Aurelian. 4, c. 43 (A. D. 545); Bracar. 3, can. 5 (A. D. 572); Carol. Magn. Capitular. A. D. 789, c. 15.

‡ Conc. Toled. 3, c. 19 (A. D. 589); Conc. Wormat. c. 6, 55; Capitular. lib. 7, c. 292.

improved in value with the advance of civilisation, and under the influence of ameliorated cultivation. Moreover, property of this kind could sustain but a temporary injury during the invasions of Norman or other plunderers; and it suffered no permanent loss even from the expenditure of extravagant or profligate bishops. The nature of the property was a better safeguard than the most stringent laws which were occasionally enacted\* to prevent the impoverishment of the Church.

Now also the Church learnt to accept from her benefactors deeds of gift which were not to come into operation until after their decease; the donor thus partaking of the Church's intercession and benediction without any immediate expense to himself. Such conveyances were even purchased by the Church for the consideration of some portion of her existing property to be enjoyed by the donor for life, in addition to the property assigned by him to the future use of the Church.† It should be added that the introduction of the feudal system contributed also to increase the amount of ecclesiastical wealth.

And it was during this period that to the Churches of the West a new source of wealth was opened in the shape of Tithes. Attempts to exact the payment of tithes had been made in more ancient times, but with little success.‡ Origen in the third century, and, in the two following centuries, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, the author of the Apostolic Constitutions, and others, urged upon the conscience of the laity

\* Conc. Toled. 3, c. 3 (A. D. 589); Toled. 9, c. 1 (A. D. 655).

† This practice was eventually prohibited by Councils; see Thomassini, part 2, lib. 3, c. 22.

‡ The spurious decretal of the Roman bishop Damasus, concerning tithes, is given up by Romanists themselves as spurious.



their obligation to pay tithes, on the ground of the Old Testament enactment in favour of the Levitical priesthood. At a still later date we find heavy complaints made by Christian bishops concerning the neglect of this Divine institution; and hence we may conclude that the admonitions of their predecessors had been almost or quite lost upon those to whom they had been addressed. Some few proprietors, indeed, appear to have paid to the Church a professed equivalent for the tenth of their possessions; others, who recognised the duty of giving the tenth to God, did not at the same time perceive the necessity of appropriating it to ecclesiastical uses, but thought themselves at liberty to dispose of it as they pleased, either in alms to the poor, in aiding a monastery, or in any other good work,—an idea which met with encouragement from some few well-disposed bishops, but was by no means satisfactory to the majority. The first united effort to obtain the payment of tithes was made in the year 567 by the Gallican bishops under Charibert, assembled in synod at Tours;\* but even then there was no call for payment exclusively to the Church. The laity were exhorted to consecrate to God (*Deo offerre*) one tenth of their possessions, after the example of Abraham, and they were assured that by this means they would most effectually secure the nine tenths remaining,—the holder of slaves being exhorted to liberate one out of every ten, “*pro mercede animæ, ut novem non possit amittere.*” Less than twenty years afterwards, however, the bishops, assembled in synod at Maçon,† professed themselves in duty bound to declare that the laity were obliged by the most express com-

\* Conc. Turonen. A. D. 567.

† Conc. Matiscon. A. D. 585, can. 5.

mand of God to pay the tenth portion of their revenue to the priest. They announced also the future exaction of these dues, and threatened with excommunication all persons who should wickedly and obstinately withhold them. At the same time the bishops undertook to appropriate the proceeds of tithes to the poor, and occasionally to the ransom of captives; meaning, of course, that they would give some portion for these purposes after their own wants were supplied, for they had already declared that tithes were necessary for the clergy in order that they might have sufficient leisure to attend to their sacred duties. It does not appear, however, that this law was observed, nor that the bishops found themselves in a position to enforce the threatened penalty. Nor does there seem to have been any attempt to exact the payment of tithes throughout the seventh century. The civil power was not yet disposed to support the Church in this demand; and therefore it was a matter of prudence or necessity not to insist upon it too strongly. At length, however, the assistance of the State in this matter was secured. Charlemagne believed, or professed to believe, that God himself had made the grant of tithes to the Church; and hence, in a great assembly held in the year 779, he caused it to be decreed in the name of the State that tithes should in future be punctually paid by every proprietor;\* and afterwards declared that even the royal demesnes should not be exempt from the operation of this law.† He also charged the priests in every place to keep an exact register of the names of all parties liable to pay tithes.‡

\* Capit. an. 779, c. 7.

† Capitulare, De Villis, c. 6. See also Capitulatio De partibus Saxonie, c. 16, 17.

‡ Capit. an. 801, c. 7.

Still, however, the law of tithes met with a considerable amount of passive resistance, and even, on the part of the Saxons, with active opposition. Great exertion of the royal authority, with the use of military coercion, was needed in order to secure compliance.

Backed by the royal sanction, the clergy were assiduous in the use of such means as were in their own power for the exaction of this unpopular tribute. For this purpose they employed various artifices; and they were sometimes assisted by the concurrence of opportune circumstances. One circumstance especially appears to have wrought greatly in their favour. Towards the end of the eighth century, two bad harvests occurred in rapid succession; and the people were persuaded, without much difficulty, that the prevailing dearth was nothing less than a visitation from heaven in consequence of their backwardness in payment of their tithes. They were even made to believe that large troops of devils visited the corn-fields during the night, rubbing the grain out of those ears which ought to have been set apart as tithes but were fraudulently kept back;\* and it is likely that the fear of these infernal tithe-collectors contributed not a little to overcome the long-standing reluctance to pay the required dues. During the first quarter of the ninth century, however, it was still found necessary to sustain the demand of the Church by many legislative enactments.†

By this adoption of the system of tithes in the Frankish empire, which at this time constituted more than one-half of Western Christendom, the way was

\* Experimento enim didicimus, in anno quo illa valida fames irrepsit, ebullire vacuas annonas a dæmonibus devoratas, et voces exprobrationis auditas. Conc. Francof. A. D. 794, c. 25.

† See Capit. tom. 1, pp. 665, 841, 857, 1214, 1288; and Conc. Mogunt. A. D. 847, c. 10; A. D. 888, c. 17; Tribur. A. D. 895, c. 13.

paved for its universal prevalence. As yet, however, there was no opportunity of establishing the law of tithes in Spain, which was chiefly under the dominion of the Saracens. In England, a document of the eighth century\* makes it evident that the bishops were at that period devising means to bring the laity to a sense of their duty in this respect. In the year 844, king Ethelwolf was so liberal in his payment of tithes that in a synod at Winchester he made over a full tenth of all the crown lands to the Church. At that time, therefore, the obligation of tithes must have been fully admitted in this country; and the established custom of this payment is presupposed in the first legislative enactment with reference to tithes in the English Church, which we find among the laws of Alfred and Edward.†

The only motive which can reasonably be attributed to Charlemagne in his enactment of the law of tithes is the firm conviction of his mind, according to the representations of his bishops, that tithes were a Divine ordinance, due to the Church by the express command of God.

It has been doubted whether the legislature at first contemplated as the material of tithe anything more than the produce of the land; but it is probable that the intention did proceed somewhat further; and certain it is that the claims put forward by the Church did not rest here, but extended even to the profits arising from trades and professions.‡ Throughout the

\* See Excerptiones of Egbert, Abp. of York, A. D. 755, n. 101, 102, 103 (Wilkins, tom. 1, p. 107).

† Leges Eccles. Edwardi Senioris ab Alfredo primum Conditæ, c. 6 (Wilkins, tom. 1, p. 103).

‡ Egbert, Archbishop of York, eighth century. "O homo, inde Dominus decimas exigit unde vivis. De militia, de negotio, de

ninth century, however, tithes were actually paid only from the produce of the land, except that in some few places they extended to increase of cattle.

The practice, derived from more ancient times, by which the entire administration of Church property was lodged with the bishops, continued to prevail in the Churches of the West as late as the ninth century.\* They were, indeed, liable to the same restrictions as heretofore respecting their incapacity to alienate Church property; but these restrictions they often attempted to put aside, as appears from the frequent re-enactment of laws to this effect, especially in Spain.† It appears probable, however, that from the first the income arising from tithes was appropriated chiefly, if not entirely, to the parochial clergy, although collected under the authority of the bishop of the diocese,—an authority which was necessary, amidst much opposition, to enforce payment. But whatever was the original destination of tithes, the bishops soon had them almost entirely in their own hands: with authority to collect these dues was speedily conjoined a right to distribute them;‡—as the bishops were wholly irresponsible, it soon happened that only a small pittance was reserved for the parishes;—and at last the tithes were declared absolutely to belong to the bishop.

III. In the West, monastic institutions assumed a far greater importance in their relations to both

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artificio, redde decimas.”—Wilkins, tom. 1, p. 107. Conf. Capitular. Saxon. c. 17.

\* Capitul. of Louis I. 814, lib. 7, c. 468; Conc. Turon. 813, c. 16; Conc. Moguntin. 813, c. 8.

† Conc. Hispalens. 2, c. 9; Toled. 4, c. 48, A. D. 633.

‡ Capit. lib. 1, c. 143; lib. 5, c. 45.

Church and State than ever belonged to them in the East. During the period now under review, they became in many ways closely interwoven with the constitution of the Church; with which, indeed, from the very first, in consequence of their religious character, they had been more especially connected.

After the sixth century the monastic spirit made great and rapid progress in all countries of the West. Italy, Gaul, and Spain were speedily covered with monasteries according to the rule of Benedict of Nursia; and the example was followed by England very soon after it had again become Christian. In those turbulent and unsettled times, monastic houses were especially valuable as places of security and peace; they also constituted the refuges of learning, and served as schools for the training of the clergy and of missionaries to go forth and propagate the Gospel among the surrounding heathen.

From the close relations existing between the monks and the clergy, it soon came to pass that the former were almost universally incorporated into the clerical order, nearly every monk receiving ordination. And in this matter the clergy were the greatest gainers; the credit of the monks among the people, which was superior to that of the ordinary clergy, being now added to their own.

Monasteries were at first subject to episcopal jurisdiction;\* but the oppressions which they suffered at the hands of the bishops were many and grievous, and formed repeated subjects of complaint addressed to councils.† It was during this period that, in the way

\* Conc. Aurelian. A. D. 511, can. 19; Conc. Epaon. A. D. 517, can. 19.

† *E. g.* Conc. Toled. A. D. 633, can. 51; A. D. 655, can. 2; Conc. Lerid. A. D. 524, can. 3; Conc. Toled. 10, A. D. 656, can. 3.

of self-defence against episcopal tyranny and exactions, certain monasteries began to claim and receive the formal grant of exemptions and privileges, such as to secure them from the illegal interference and demands of the diocesan bishops; a system which afterwards (in the eighth century) extended itself to exemption from diocesan jurisdiction altogether.

In the seventh and eighth centuries many monasteries having been founded by sovereigns, these royal founders and patrons thought their own honour concerned in distinguishing them with particular immunities and privileges, and therefore declared these institutions to be under their own immediate and special protection. Their chief object in so doing was not to withdraw these establishments from the legitimate jurisdiction of bishops, but to maintain them in the undisturbed possession of their property against spoliation, and to preserve them free from certain services and burdens; but it is also evident that one further design of the royal founders and patrons was to secure their foundations from the undue exactions and oppressive power of the bishops. The privilege of electing their own abbots,\* which was not unfrequently granted to monasteries in this age, secured them against the intrusion of bishops, who were often found to force their own nominees upon the monasteries in their dioceses, or even to make themselves abbots. This abuse was in some cases favoured by the prevalent practice of filling sees with monks from certain monasteries; as, for example, the bishops of Strasburgh were almost always selected from the abbey of Münster,—those of Spire from that of

\* But subject to the confirmation of the bishop.—Capitul. lib. 5, c. 386; Conc. Francof. A. D. 813, c. 17.

Weissenberg,—those of Constance from that of St. Gall or that of Reichenau. John, bishop of Constance, elected about 760, formerly abbot of St. Gall, not only retained this abbacy, but afterwards added to it that of Reichenau; and towards the end of his life he succeeded in dividing his plurality of benefices among his three nephews,—to one the bishopric,—to another, the abbacy of St. Gall,—and to the third, that of Reichenau.

The bishops made war upon these peculiar privileges, and often endeavoured to induce the monks to surrender at least some part of the benefits which were thus secured to them. Hence it became a point with the monasteries to obtain the recognition of their charters by the pope, in order to protect themselves against the plea of uncanonical regulations or articles,—a plea which the bishops were apt, if raise.

Similar privileges, but still with reservation of the real canonical rights of the bishops, appear to have been granted during this period by the popes; although various documents, bearing the date of the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, professing to confer such privileges with exemption from episcopal jurisdiction, are of doubtful authority, or have even been proved to be spurious. Such was the celebrated privilege said to have been granted by Gregory I., A. D. 594, to the monastery of St. Medard, at Soissons;\* and another, eight years after, by Adeodatus to the monastery of St. Martin at Tours. It is probable that the monastery of Fulda was placed under the immediate and exclusive jurisdiction of the pope

\* See Launoi, *Examen de certains Privileges*; *Inquisitio in Privilegium St. Medardi*, tom. 3, p. 2.



(Zacharias, A. D. 751) from the very first, although this has been called in question.

On the whole, it may well be doubted whether any monastery whatever was withdrawn from the lawful jurisdiction of its diocesan bishop during the whole of the period now under review.

During the ninth century, and even for some time previously, the more wealthy monasteries often fell a prey to the rapacity of powerful laymen, especially in times of anarchy. Not unfrequently the plunder was committed under royal sanction, with the formality of an appointment as lay-abbot.

During this period an attempt was made, if not to convert the whole body of the clergy into monks, yet at least to impart to them very largely the character of a monastic order. This attempt, which was attended with rapid and extensive success, consisted in the institution of the Canonical Life, which subsequently led to various, and in part unexpected, results.

About the year 760, Chrodegang, bishop of Metz, introduced among his clergy a rule (*Canon, Regula*), or system, by which all the clergy of a particular church or locality lived together in one house, subject to a superior in the person of the bishop, and submitting to the observance of certain regulations respecting their diet, occupations, devotions, and the like; these regulations being, in fact, in many instances, identical with those which had been established by Benedict of Nursia, and the whole system possessing all the essential features of monasticism, except that permission was given to hold personal property. The houses of the clergy who thus lived together were called monasteries; the regular clergy adopted an uniform

dress, called each other brethren, and lived together under the immediate superintendence of provosts and deans.

Some such system had been introduced by Augustine among his clergy at Hippo, and also by Eusebius, bishop of Vercelli; but the rule of Chrodegang was the beginning of a formal and general establishment of these institutions. It was doubtless designed as a work of reformation, with a view to improve the morals and to raise the character of the clergy by means of the best attainable discipline. Many bishops speedily adopted the institute, and in the course of a short time it became very prevalent throughout the West. Before the middle of the ninth century it had been introduced into all the Churches of Germany, France, and Italy; and about that time it was authorised by the State as well as by the Church, and received the sanction of law in all countries belonging to the Frankish monarchy.\*

These regulations and restrictions, however burdensome to the clergy, met with no resistance on their part, but were readily accepted; and the institution became popular also among the laity. The laity, doubtless, regarded it as a check upon the sins and disorders of the clergy, and as a means of edification to themselves; while the clergy found in it a security for their own subsistence, which, to many of them, who were very poor, was no inconsiderable advantage; and, what was perhaps of still greater importance to the whole body, they saw in it a means of counter-

\* Capitularies of Charlemagne, A. D. 789, c. 71; A. D. 802, c. 22; Councils of Arles, Rheims, Mayence, A. D. 813. In 816, Louis I. incorporated the Regula of Chrodegang in the Capitularies confirmed in a large assembly at Aix la Chapelle.—Regula Aquisgranensis.

balancing the great popularity of the monks, and of securing to themselves that reputation of superior sanctity upon which their popularity had been founded. And this they may have regarded as an important step towards securing for themselves that wealth which had long so abundantly flowed into the monasteries.

IV. From the beginning of this period an attempt was made, and afterwards systematically pursued, to tighten the bonds of the diocesan system, and to render the power of the bishops more absolute. And this is by no means to be regarded as merely the result of avarice or ambition on the part of the bishops. The civil commotions of Gaul and Spain, from the fifth century to the seventh, had occasioned many disorders and irregularities in the smaller Churches, which required the greatest activity and immediate supervision on the part of the bishops in order to their adjustment; and in the new Churches of England and Germany the great extent of the dioceses rendered it indispensable that the bishop should possess summary powers in the government of those widely-scattered communities which acknowledged his authority. It is obvious that much which may be done by the personal influence of a bishop, among clergy with whom he is in the habit of intercourse, can be effected only by the stern voice of authority and law in the case of a large body of clergy, who are for the most part acquainted with their superior only by name or in his official capacity; and hence it is also plain that large dioceses contribute in more ways than one to the elevation of episcopal dominion. Accordingly, the old laws relating to episcopal authority and jurisdiction were enforced, defined, and sometimes altered so as to

adapt them to existing circumstances; while the regulations already in force against the interference of bishops in the affairs of other dioceses than their own, and against the migration of clergy from one diocese to another, were made more stringent than ever. At the same time power was vested in the bishops to transfer their clergy from one church to another in their own dioceses. These anti-migratory laws contributed very largely to increase and consolidate the power of the bishops over their clergy.\*

In consequence of a custom, which had been introduced by the nobles and large landed proprietors among the Christian Franks and Burgundians in Gaul, of retaining domestic chaplains, who ministered to large households and bodies of dependents, measures were adopted to save the rights, whether parochial or diocesan, which were thus threatened, and to retain the chaplains themselves in obedience to the bishops.†

In order to the stricter government of dioceses and the better administration of their affairs, the bishops now divided their dioceses into several districts, and again distributed the parishes and clergy of each district into smaller associations, which were called rural chapters; while each entire district was under the presidency of an archdeacon, who was immediately charged by the bishop to provide for the preservation of order and discipline. The precise date of this

\* Conc. Arelat. 2, A. D. 451, c. 13; Vernens. A. D. 755, c. 12; Valentin. A. D. 524, c. 6; Hispalens. 2, A. D. 619, c. 3; Toled. 4, A. D. 633; Toled. 11, A. D. 675, c. 10; Capitul. Aquisgranens. A. D. 789, c. 24.

† Conc. Agathens. (Agde), A. D. 506, c. 21; Aurelian. 4, A. D. 546, c. 21; Synod. Cabillon. (Chalons), A. D. 650, c. 14; Capitul. (of Champagne), A. D. 802, c. 21.

establishment of archdeaconries is obscure. As early as the fourth century there were archdeacons, who formed a superior order of clergy, in more immediate connection with the bishops, by whom they were often employed as their vicars or representatives, and were intrusted with the delegated exercise of their episcopal authority. And hence, no doubt, arose the practice of appointing them as permanent vicars or delegates in fixed districts. It is highly probable that as late as the middle of the seventh century there was only one archdeacon in each diocese;\* and it is not unlikely that the distribution of dioceses into several archdeaconries took place pretty generally in the early part of the reign of Charlemagne. Certain it is that about this time Heddo, bishop of Strasburg, divided his large diocese into seven archdeaconries, and made the archdeacons irremovable except for canonical offences. When there was only one archdeacon, he had his arch-presbyter under him; so that the subordination of rural deaneries is to be regarded as a matter of gradual formation, rather than as an institution complete at once.

This appointment of archdeacons might have been made to contribute to good and efficient ecclesiastical government. In practice, however, it was found to be productive of more harm than benefit. In the course of the ninth century, when the institution had become general, the bishops began to leave the business of their dioceses almost entirely in the hands of the archdeacons, by whom they considered themselves to be lawfully relieved from the more burdensome duties of their office. Perhaps many of them were

\* Conc. Emerit. (Merida), A. D. 666, c. 10; Antissiodor. 578, c. 20; Cabillon. 650, c. 14.

personally incompetent to the discharge of those duties; and the civil commotions under Louis and his sons may have contributed to the mischievous result: but, be this as it may, the archdeacons were now such important and powerful personages that they began to be more than a match for the bishops themselves. Already they urged the pretension that they acted not merely as delegates or representatives of the bishops, but by virtue of their own office; and the bishops were so dilatory in making any protest on their part, that at length these assumptions acquired the force of prescriptive right. During the period now under review, every archdeacon became an almost absolute ruler in his own district, and the several dioceses fell under the severe despotism of persons who employed their power with a view to their own advantage, without caring for the ruin of the Church. Even laymen now sought the lucrative post of archdeacon,—an abuse which was prohibited by Charlemagne in the year 805.

During this period, especially in the Spanish and Gallican Churches of the sixth and seventh centuries, the parochial clergy were greatly oppressed by plunder and spoliation on the part of the bishops: loud complaints on this head were addressed to councils, and many canons were passed with a view to remove or lighten the grievance; but great abuses arising from episcopal avarice and extortion continued to exist.

Another peculiarity in the diocesan constitution of the new churches tended, however, to limit the power and influence of the bishops, or at least to restrain the arbitrary exercise of their authority. This was the system of patronage which was now in course of formation. Already, in earlier times, certain privileges

had been granted to persons who built or endowed churches, with a view to stimulate the zeal of the laity to this good work. These privileges consisted at first perhaps entirely in certain tokens of respect, such as the insertion of their names in the public prayers of the Church, or the emblazoning of those names as benefactors in some part of the sacred edifice; and, not long afterwards, a custom was introduced of giving them some influence or share in the nomination of the officiating clergy. At length, in the course of the seventh century, the right of presentation to benefices was formally conceded to all patrons, whether ecclesiastical or lay.\*

In many cases, however, churches were built and endowed by laymen, with the reservation of certain rights to themselves as patrons; a reservation sometimes perhaps only of a certain portion of the proceeds of the estate conveyed to the church, but sometimes also of a certain portion, extending in some instances to one half, of the voluntary offerings or fees. That is to say, churches were built, as in modern times, on speculation, with a view to a pecuniary return. And although the impropriety of this speculation was severely felt, and the bishops perceived that it was at variance with their interests, it is doubtful whether they succeeded in entirely removing the evil during this period.† The synod of Braga, A.D. 572, prohibited bishops from consecrating churches erected under these conditions.

In the time of Charlemagne advowsons were sold, and were even divided into portions among heirs.‡

\* East, Justinian, Nov. 57, c. 2; Nov. 123, c. 10; West, Conc. Toled. 9, A. D. 655.

† Conc. Bracar. 3, c. 6.

‡ Capit. C. M. A. D. 794, c. 52.

Presentations also were often sold; but this practice was continually denounced as an abuse.

Patrons and their heirs were formally invested with the right of exercising a kind of oversight of the churches which they had founded, and especially with power to see that the funds were appropriated to their proper purposes according to the intentions of the donor. This right even included power to proceed legally against the bishop of the diocese if he should attempt any act of spoliation or misappropriation.\*

The patron could indeed only nominate to a benefice, and present his nominee to the bishop, with whom it still rested to ordain the candidate, and admit him to the benefice, with power to reject him on the ground of unfitness or unworthiness.† Still this was a considerable limitation of the power of the bishops, compared with that which they had formerly possessed;‡ not to mention the fact that the law appears to have been often evaded or infringed, so that patrons presented and instituted without the bishop's consent.

A further limitation of episcopal power arose from the institution of the canonical life among the clergy; whence came chapters, and their influence in the administration of diocesan affairs.

The bishops who introduced this mode of life among the clergy regarded it as a means of holding them more completely under their own observation and control, and of restraining their vices and improving their morals, by making them more amenable to ecclesiastical discipline. And these results appear to have followed, until the beginning of the ninth century; the institution having been made a means of retaining

\* Conc. Toled. A. D. 633, can. 39; *ibid.* A. D. 655, c. 1.

† Conc. Toled. A. D. 655.

‡ Conc. Emerit. A. D. 666, c. 2.



the clergy almost in a state of servile dependence upon their episcopal superiors. About the middle of the ninth century, however, we find the first symptoms of a change which the existence of the chapters was destined to effect in the whole system of diocesan administration. The communities which now formed the clergy of every cathedral church had converted themselves into colleges under the title of chapters, finding their strength in united action. These chapters maintained that they represented the presbyteral college of the ancient ecclesiastical constitution, and that accordingly the bishops were bound to regard them as their standing council, without whose advice and consent they could not rightly undertake or determine anything. In short, they laid claim to nothing less than a share in the government of the diocese; and they succeeded in making themselves in many respects independent of the bishops, and in establishing at least some portion of their pretensions. This change of affairs did not, however, fully take place until the next period, under which its whole history will be more appropriately considered.

From the very origin of these Churches, everything tended to loosen the bonds of the metropolitan union; and efforts which were made from time to time to prevent this dissolution were attended with but little effect.

The revolution by which these countries were torn from the ancient dominion of Rome, including an arbitrary partition of territory among the various hordes of invaders, at once tended to introduce confusion into the limits of metropolitan provinces. The Lombard king of Italy, for example, would not suffer the

bishops over whom he ruled to recognise the bishop of Milan as their metropolitan, as long as Milan itself was not included in his dominion. So in Gaul, the Burgundian and Frankish sovereigns severally would not suffer their own bishops to acknowledge submission to a metropolitan who was not subject to their rule. Difficulties also continued to arise in the way of that redistribution of ecclesiastical provinces which had thus become necessary for the maintenance of the metropolitan system; and various efforts which were made to establish a patriarchal system proved utterly abortive.

A restoration of the metropolitan authority was indeed undertaken by Pepin and Carloman;\* and it took effect in France and Germany, with certain limitations and restrictions, securing the rights of the bishops. But this institution, although on a reformed footing, never took firm root in the new states; partly in consequence of the dominant power of the sovereign in the several states, and partly (afterwards) because it was overshadowed by the rising power of the pope.

Our survey of the course of events has already made us acquainted with many of the means by which this papal power was acquired, and the steps with which it proceeded. But we must now take a general review of its progress, bestowing a special consideration on some of the details of its history.

From the third century the bishop of Rome claimed precedence, or superiority of rank, over all bishops of Christendom. This claim was often contested by the patriarchs of Constantinople; but in the West it was always allowed that the Church of Rome was the first

\* Capit. an. 742, c. 1; 755, c. 2.

and principal Church in the world, and its bishop the first and principal bishop. Not satisfied with this, the bishops of Rome had themselves laid claim to the right of a certain oversight of the whole Church, with jurisdiction in all ecclesiastical matters, or at least the right of superior jurisdiction in the last instance, in all matters of controversy not decided by an inferior tribunal. But neither of these claims had been ever universally admitted, nor could a valid title to either of them be produced. Opportunities and occasions of setting up such claims were, however, not unfrequently presented, with great facilities of giving it a colour of right, and of enforcing or insuring its partial recognition. At the same time it must be remembered that, until the close of the seventh century, the bishops of Rome stood more or less directly in the relation of vassals or subjects of the Byzantine empire. But, during that century, they acquired a far greater amount of power and influence in Italy than they had formerly possessed; they gained a political importance which made itself felt and respected at Constantinople, especially when that court was obliged to seek the aid of large proprietors and influential persons in Italy against the Lombards. Still, until about the middle of the eighth century, the Roman bishops were vassals of the Greek emperors; and this relation in which they stood to the court of Constantinople could not but affect their position with regard to the newly-founded states and Churches of the West; an influence, however, which was felt in different degrees, and in some cases did not even exist.

To the Lombards, the connection of the Roman bishops with Constantinople rendered them an object of jealousy, as forming a barrier against their power;

while they were already obnoxious as the heads of the orthodox party against their own Arian section of Christendom: and even when the Lombards became Catholic, still the diversity of political interests was on the whole more than a match for the concord arising from similarity of faith. The Lombard kings forbade their bishops to recognise the ecclesiastical supremacy of the bishop of Rome.

The relation of the Roman bishops to the Frankish state in Gaul was somewhat different, but was never so advantageous as they desired and endeavoured to make it. No hostility existed between Constantinople and the Frankish sovereigns; nor did any impediment exist under the new regime to the maintenance of the connection which formerly subsisted between the bishops of Rome and the Gallican Churches; but rather the way was open to their obtaining an influence over the conquerors themselves, and to a renewing of their pretensions of supremacy over the Gallican Church, in due time. When Arles had come into the hands of the Franks, it was represented to Childebert, on occasion of the appointment of a new bishop Auxanius, that the bishopric of Arles had hitherto been distinguished by the honour of receiving the pall from Rome, as a mark of the highest ecclesiastical dignity; and Childebert was persuaded to apply to Rome in his own name, for the grant of this dignity to the new bishop, A.D. 545: the request was complied with, but the grant was coupled with an explanation, on the part of Vigilius,\* the Roman bishop, that he must also send to the new bishop his patent as Roman vicar, which had always hitherto accompanied the pall. In short, the Roman bishops contrived

\* Vigil. Ep. 6 (Labbe).

to perpetuate their influence in Gaul during this period by various methods; but not to the extent which they themselves desired. The Frankish kings sometimes referred ecclesiastical matters to Rome, or permitted them to be so referred, when it suited their own views to adopt this course; but at other times, and for the most part, they acted with regard to their own bishops as if there was no superior in the Church. Rome found it necessary respectfully to recognise the right of the Frankish sovereigns;\* and in the course of the seventh century there appears to have been an entire cessation of all intercourse between Rome and the Gallican Church,—so much so that, during a whole century, from Gregory I to Gregory II., among all the epistles and decretals of the popes, we do not find a single document having reference to Church affairs in Gaul. Even the vicarial relations of Arles to Rome was discontinued; a fact which may probably be accounted for, to a certain extent, by the wars and disorders which engaged public attention at this period of Gallican history.

The circumstances of the Church in Spain were much more favourable to the views and plans of Rome. In this country the ancient communication with Rome was assiduously maintained from the very first establishment of the kingdom of the Visigoths; the orthodox bishops seeking protection against the Arian bishops whom the conquerors had brought with them, and even entertaining the hope that, through the influence of Rome, in connection with Constantinople, they might one day succeed in shaking off the Visigoths altogether. When at length the orthodox faith was fully established in Spain, and the catholic party ob-

\* See Greg. Mag. Epist. lib. 10, Epp. 110, 117.

tained the upper hand under Recared and his successors, the bishops were not backward in acknowledging and repaying the assistance they had received from Rome. In no country were the expressions of respect towards the Roman bishop more profound, or the Roman claims of supremacy more freely or unreservedly admitted. Leo the Great appointed as his vicar in Spain his personal friend Toribius, bishop of Astorga, a simple suffragan, who was under the metropolitan of Braga. The successors of Leo, Simplicius and Hormisdas, intrusted this dignity to the metropolitan of Seville.

In 538, Vigilius, in an epistle to the bishop of Braga, employed language which, for the space of three centuries, no pope had ventured to use in writing to Gallican bishops,—asserting the supremacy of Rome in a tone of such haughty insolence that has led even some defenders of the papal supremacy to question the document in which it is contained. During the seventh century, the correspondence between Rome and Spain appears to have been less active than formerly; but still the relation of acknowledged superiority and dependence remained unaltered. In 701, king Witiza indeed boldly asserted the independence of the Church of Spain against the pretensions of Rome; but not long afterwards, Spain was cut off from all connection with other Christian nations by the invasion and successes of the Saracens.

In the Church of England, from the date of the mission of Augustine, papal influence was great and preponderating; but the total subjugation of this country by the Romish usurpation was not effected previously to the Norman conquest.

Such were the relations in which the bishops of

Rome stood at first towards the new Christian kingdoms of the West; and herein was no appearance of a probability that the whole of Western Christendom would ever be brought under the ecclesiastical supremacy of the pope. At the beginning of the eighth century, two of these states, at once the most considerable, and in their position nearest to Rome, the Frankish and Lombard, not only did not recognise any duty of submission to Rome, but manifested no desire to be instructed on this head. The greater part of the Spanish Church had fallen under the dominion of the Saracens, and had been cut off from all communication with the rest of the Christian world. The English Church did, indeed, recognise the authority of the Romish see, but only on grounds which, at that time, were applicable to no other Church; it recognised the bishop of Rome as its superior,—not because he was bishop of Rome, or successor of St. Peter, and in this capacity the head of the whole Church, but rather because he was in a certain sense its founder.

It therefore becomes extremely important to observe how, from such a position as this, the Roman bishops succeeded in accomplishing the object at which they had been aiming ever since the fourth century,—how they succeeded in founding the monarchy of the papacy, properly so called, over the whole of Western Europe, and inducing all, including the Churches of the new states, to acknowledge their supremacy. Some most efficient steps towards this result were taken during the period now under review; for, from the middle of the eighth century to the middle of the ninth, the bishops of Rome certainly stood in a relation towards the Western Churches different from that

which they had hitherto occupied. And here it is of especial interest and importance to observe how this transformation of the Roman bishops into popes took place with reference to the Lombard and Frankish Churches;—it is more easy to perceive how it occurred with reference to those of Spain and Britain.

I. In Germany, many new Churches were now planted, which were from the very first dependent upon the Romish see, and gave occasion to a renewed intercourse between Rome and the Franco-Gallic Churches.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, these new Churches were founded in the interior of Germany chiefly by missionaries from Rome, in the same way as the Church had been founded, during the sixth century, among the Anglo-Saxons in England. This work was effected,\* from about the middle of the seventh century, by Kilian, Corbinian, Pirmin, Willibrod, and others, especially English and Irish monks; and these were succeeded, in the eighth century, by Winfred or Boniface, who completed the work which his predecessors had begun, and earned for himself the title of the apostle of Germany. Winfred, who may be regarded as the founder of the German Church, was pre-eminently a missionary of Rome; he was bound by vow to convert Germany for the pope. In 719, he was sent out by Gregory II. in the capacity of a papal legate; and in 722 he was sent with a special letter of recommendation to Charles Martel and the German bishops and nobles, having been previously made a bishop. Afterwards, he was created by Gregory III. archbishop of Mayence, primate of

\* See Baron. an. 650, n. 12; 690, n. 1, 7; 709, n. 2; 711, n. 2, 3; 716, n. 10; 724, n. 18.



Germany, and papal vicar in that country.\* So that the Churches of Germany were, from the very first, subject to the see of Rome; or, to say the least, the bishops of Rome stood to them in the relation of patriarchs. These Churches not only submitted to all regulations and ordinances which Boniface established in his quality of papal legate, but, in the year 743 or 744, their bishops, in synod assembled, subscribed an act tendered to them by Boniface, in which they formally and solemnly vowed perpetual obedience to the see of Rome.†

Hence came a renewed intercourse between Rome and the Frankish Churches of Gaul. Most of the provinces in which Boniface founded or reorganised Churches (as Bavaria, Thuringia, &c.) were already, or fell soon afterwards, under the dominion of the Franks, whose power continued to make progress in Germany. And this circumstance furnished opportunity of extending that papal influence to the old Franco-Gallican Churches. The bishops of Treves, Lyons, Soissons, Tours, &c., observed that their brethren of Mayence, Wurtzburg, Eichstadt, were in constant communication with Rome; they perceived also that these bishops were held in great respect by the princes and people; and, tracing this possession of influence, not without reason, to their connection with Rome, they were hence disposed to covet, rather than to shrink from, the same position. Besides this, Pepin and Carloman, at that time the rulers of the Franks, beheld with admiration‡ the excellent order

\* He was made archbishop by Gregory III. in 732, without diocese; in 745, made Archbishop of Mayence by Pepin and Carloman, and confirmed in this dignity, at his own request, by the pope, in 748.

† Ep. of Boniface to his friend Cuthbert, in England.

‡ Boniface, Ep. 15.

and discipline which Boniface had introduced into the newly-founded Churches, and invited the apostle of Germany to use his efforts for the establishment of the same order in those of Gaul. Hence, in 742, Boniface came into Gaul in his capacity of papal legate, where he held three successive synods,\* by which bishoprics were restored, metropolitans appointed, and provincial synods reinstated. In these synods, which were national conventions, Boniface acted, indeed, in concert with Pepin and Carloman; but still he acted in his capacity of papal legate. It was not pretended that the authority of the pope was necessary in order to changes or reforms in the Gallican Churches; but it was felt that these reforms could be facilitated and assisted by papal intervention; and we find that Pepin consulted Zacharias upon several points relating to ecclesiastical affairs. Boniface knew also how to gain over several of the newly-appointed archbishops to the interests of Rome, and induced them to subscribe the same act of submission which had already received the signatures of the Germans. He also persuaded most of the new metropolitans to apply to Rome for the pall;—an indirect and tacit, but real and effectual, token of submission to the authority of that see.

This new connection between Rome and Gaul was strengthened by political events. Pepin, who had now succeeded in setting aside the Carlovingian dynasty, and seating himself on the throne, felt his need of the services of the bishop of Rome in order to establish himself in his new position. The Franks had some misgivings on the ground of their oath of allegiance to Childeric, and it was thought that these

\* Synodus Germanica (place unknown); Syn. Liptinensis (of Lestines, near Cambray), in 742; at Soissons, in 743.

could be most successfully removed by the interposition of papal authority. Accordingly, at the instigation of Pepin, the Frankish nobles sent an embassy to Rome, in 751, requesting from the pope a theological reply to the question, whether they might elect as king the brave Pepin, in the room of the weak and incompetent Childeric; Zacharias gave them an answer in accordance with the wishes of the nation; and in the following year (752) he commissioned Boniface to anoint Pepin king. Whatever might have been the views of Pepin and the Frankish nobility in this matter, such a proceeding could not but tend to exalt the pope in the eyes of the Frankish nation. There is no reason to suppose that Zacharias claimed a power to nominate or depose kings by his own right, or that the Frankish nobles were disposed to invest him with such power;\* but, at the same time, it is also plain that the people were the more willing to acknowledge Pepin as king inasmuch as he was approved by the pope, and anointed by his legate; and it is equally plain that such popular feeling was greatly to the advantage of the Roman see. From this moment the bishop of Rome stood in a position, with regard to the Frankish nation, quite different from that which he had formerly occupied;† and it was not likely that it would be long before he would assume increased authority with regard to the bishops of that realm. Besides this, even before there was time for these consequences to develop themselves, a revolution took place in the affairs of Italy, which tended to bring the popes into still closer contact and alliance with the sovereigns of

\* See Launoi, *Epp.* tom. 5, 82, pp. 477—487; Natal. Alex. *Dissert.* II. pp. 96—107.

† See Baronius, *ad an.* 755, n. 46.

France. The Lombards had made such progress that scarcely anything more than the possession of the city and territory of Rome was wanted to put into their hands the dominion of the whole of Italy; and it had become evident that they would rest satisfied with nothing short of this complete mastery. The popes could not but dread the dominion of the Lombards in Rome as a great calamity; and yet they could expect but little help from Constantinople, inasmuch as, after the loss of Ravenna and the exarchate, the emperors were scarcely able to maintain a shadow of their former authority in the other parts of Italy. At length, in 739, Gregory III. found himself compelled to apply for protection to Charles Martel, entreating him to hasten to the aid of St. Peter and his Church. Martel, however, either because he was sufficiently occupied with other affairs, or because he found that the succour of Rome against the Lombards would be unpopular among the Franks, did not comply with the call. Nor did Zacharias make any such application to the sons of Charles Martel, Pepin and Carloman, notwithstanding his more intimate relations with them. Stephen II., successor of Zacharias, even renewed application to Constantinople before he appealed to the Franks. At length, however, he directed his entreaties to Pepin (A.D. 753), and even undertook a journey to France, in 754, to urge his request in person. His entreaties prevailed. In 754 and 755, Pepin marched into Italy, defeated the Lombards in two battles, and compelled their king, Aistulf, to submit to terms of peace, by which he was obliged to restore whatever had been plundered from the patrimony of St. Peter, and even to cede some portion of other conquests to the possessions of the holy see. The Lombards retained,

indeed, a great portion of Italy, and Pepin speedily retired from that country, reserving to himself only the title of patrician of the city of Rome, and the character of its sovereign protector. By this means an end was effectually put to the relations formerly existing between Rome and Constantinople; and the pope even consented to receive from Pepin a grant of the exarchate of Ravenna which had hitherto belonged to the Greek emperor.

Rome has been charged with treachery to Constantinople in this matter; but it has been perhaps truly said that the bishops of Rome were driven by necessity to the course which they adopted; no choice being left to them but either to submit to the Lombards, or to throw themselves into the arms of a prince who could extend to them that protection which their own hitherto acknowledged sovereigns were unable to afford.

It soon became manifest that in this interference Pepin was animated, not by devotion to St. Peter, by gratitude to his successor for favours received, or by compassion for the distresses of the pope and the calamities of the Church in Italy, but by a view to his own advantage. He had, perhaps, already conceived the idea of obtaining a firm footing in Italy, and gradually subjecting the whole country to Frankish dominion; and he probably regarded his possession of the Roman patriciate as the opening of a door through which he might eventually make his way to the desired ascendancy. Circumstances, indeed, prevented Pepin himself from accomplishing his design; but his son and successor, Charlemagne, did not fail to make successful use of the opportunities afforded to him. The Lombards continued to give occasion to the popes to

call upon their Frankish protectors for assistance. In 773, Charlemagne marched to the assistance of Rome against Desiderius, and in the following year he took Pavia, and compelled the Lombards to recognise himself as king of Italy. Two expeditions, in 781 and 786, completed the establishment of the Frankish power in Italy, and on Christmas-day 800, Charlemagne was crowned Roman emperor by Leo III.

Both Pepin and Charlemagne, as we have seen, enlarged the patrimony of St. Peter by large donations. There is no proof that these donations really included all which succeeding popes claimed by virtue of this title; but still there is every reason to believe that considerable portions of the exarchate of Ravenna, of the duchy of Benevento, and of Tuscany, were included in these grants. And it was, doubtless, politic on the part of Charlemagne thus to place great wealth and power in the hands of the bishop of Rome, whom he would naturally regard as his most valuable ally in Italy, to serve as a check upon the probable turbulence and disaffection of the newly-conquered Lombards.

By this change of masters, the popes were now delivered from the fear of falling under the dominion of the Lombards; they obtained an increase of wealth and of that political influence which attaches to territorial possessions; way was made for the complete attainment of that ecclesiastical supremacy in Italy which had been held in check by the existence of independent metropolitans and bishops under Lombard rule; and, above all, the pope obtained a large accession of ecclesiastical weight and influence throughout the whole empire of Charlemagne.

It must not, however, be supposed that Charlemagne was disposed to part with his own ecclesiastical

supremaey in favour of the pope. Even if it be conceded that the emperor encouraged the bishops to appeal to the pope in the last instance on purely Church questions,—if it be granted that he had recourse to the pope in all matters relating to faith and worship, and that he accorded to the pope a certain right of superintendence or oversight over the whole Church, or desired to have him acknowledged as the supreme guardian of the ecclesiastical laws,—still it remains indisputable that he regarded the pontiff himself not only as bound to observe the laws of the Church, and limited in his power by their operation, but also as bound and limited by his own imperial laws, or by the supreme power of the State whatever it might be, and this with relation to ecclesiastical no less than to temporal affairs.

It is clear also that the bishops of Rome, in common with all other bishops of the empire, were regarded and treated as subjects of Charlemagne and his successors, from whom they received confirmation in their office.

At the same time it was manifest that the Frank and German bishops were by no means ready to regard the pope as an infallible dictator in matters of faith, notwithstanding the language of reverence, and even servility, with which it was now their custom to approach him. This Teutonic spirit of independence was strikingly displayed in the strong dissent to the opinions and proceedings of the bishops of Rome in support of the doctrines of the second Nicene Council concerning image-worship, which was expressed by their bishops at the Assembly at Frankfort, A. D. 794, and again at the Synod of Paris, convened by Louis I. in 825.

The same bishops evinced a reluctance to acknowledge a supreme jurisdiction of the bishop of Rome;\* while yet they were forward to affirm that the primacy of the whole world had been committed to him by God, when a layman was found to set his authority at defiance.†

On the whole, it appears that the Roman pontiffs had not yet attained the actual possession and exercise of ecclesiastical supremacy over all the Churches of the West; but they had made great progress towards the attainment of this power,—they were now all but supreme in ecclesiastical matters. In Spain and Britain that supremacy had been already recognised; by the revolution which had made Italy a part of the Frankish monarchy, the way to such recognition throughout Gaul and Italy was prepared; and Germany had to a considerable extent professed adhesion to the principles of submission.

But the progress which was being made towards universal dominion was not sufficiently rapid to satisfy the ambition of Rome. The ancient ecclesiastical laws and rights had taken too deep root to allow of being immediately reversed by its boldest attempts or its most crafty policy; and recourse was now had to one of the most shameless impostures ever perpetrated, by means of which the designs of the Roman pontiff were rapidly carried forward to a point which perhaps they would not otherwise have reached during several centuries. Suddenly there appeared a professed collection of Epistles of Roman bishops, from the time of the apostles to the beginning of the seventh century, in which the doctrine was distinctly and

\* In the Council of Verneuil, Conc. Verneus. 2, A. D. 844, c. 2.

† Syn. Paris. 890.



forcibly laid down that the Roman pontiff was the supreme head, lawgiver, and judge of the whole Church, without whose approbation and concurrence the acts of neither metropolitans nor councils could possess any validity. These ancient and venerable documents, said to have been collected in the seventh century by the celebrated Isidore, bishop of Seville, and now published under the title of 'Decretal Epistles,'—but in reality very different from the collection under the name of that writer which had become known in the course of the eighth century,—appeared to possess an authority beyond the reach of cavil or of doubt; and that respect and submission to the Roman see which had hitherto been regarded by some as a matter of opinion, or as the necessary conclusion from certain premises, or which others had supposed to have been founded only in prescription, from long usage and ancient custom, was now proclaimed and accepted as involved in the very constitution of the Church from the beginning.

Various opinions exist as to the time at which this collection was made, and the precise date of its publication. Mabillon supposes the compilation to have been made about A. D. 785; and in this opinion he is followed by others. But the collection did not appear until after the death of Charlemagne. Some think that these Decretals cannot be of an earlier date than 829; and Blondel supposed that he discovered in them traces of the acts of a council at Paris held in that year. All that can be determined is that most probably the Decretals were first published in France, perhaps at Mayence, about the middle of the ninth century; but it is impossible to discover their real author.

The spuriousness of these Decretals was first exposed by the Magdeburg Centuriators,\* with a degree of historical and critical acumen beyond the age in which they lived. The Jesuit Turrianus endeavoured, but in vain, to defend the spurious documents against this attack. He was answered by Blondel, who may be said to have exhausted the subject by his laborious and acute exposition of multiplied traces of forgery in each of the Epistles. Of these Epistles none (except two, which appear on other grounds to be spurious) were ever heard of before the ninth century. They contain a vast number of anachronisms and historical inaccuracies. Passages are quoted from more recent writings, including the Vulgate, according to the version of Jerome; and, although the several Epistles profess to have been written by different pontiffs, the style is manifestly uniform, and often very barbarous, such as could not have proceeded from Roman writers of the first century.

The brothers Ballerini, writing under the protection of a pope, confidently assert that these Decretals effected no essential alteration in the ecclesiastical laws; inasmuch as that, although the collection as it stands is undoubtedly spurious, yet in fact it consists of extracts from the fathers, decrees of councils, and ordinances made by Roman bishops after Siricius; and that the imposition consists merely in attaching false names to genuine writings. Lupus, as before him Cardinal Bona, and afterwards Cenni, treat the whole matter as only a pious fraud.

The success of this forgery would appear incredible, did we not take into account the weak and confused government of the successors of Charlemagne, in

\* Magd. Cent. 2, c. 7; De Gubernat. Eccles.

whose time it was promulgated; the want of critical acumen and resources in that age; the skill with which the pontiffs made use of the Decretals only by degrees; and the great authority and power possessed by the Roman pontiffs in these times. The name of Isidore also served to recommend these documents, many persons being ready to believe that they were in fact only a completion of the genuine collection of Isidore, which was highly esteemed. It is doubtful, indeed, what Spanish collection of ecclesiastical laws is to be attributed to this celebrated archbishop of Seville in the first half of the seventh century, or what hand he may have had in any collection now extant; but it is certain that a collection executed by him was extant when the forger borrowed his name. The unknown compiler was subsequently called Pseudo-Isidorus, or Isidorus Mercator; the latter name having perhaps arisen from an error of transcription for Peccator, a title which bishops in these times were in the habit of affixing to their names.

The effect of these Decretals will be seen in the future history of the Papacy; but it may be well to give here a true view of the history of this collection itself. In 845, Benedict, a deacon of Mayence (whom some suppose to have been the writer), made use of them in a collection of laws which he published, relating to the empire of the Franks. They were appealed to and quoted by Charles the Bald, A. D. 857. Hinemar of Rheims rejected them; but Nicholas I. insisted upon their genuineness and authority, in an epistle to the bishops of Gaul, A. D. 865:\* and after the use which the popes made of these Decretals in their transactions with France it was seldom that any

\* Epist. Nicol. I., ad Universos Episcopos Gallie (Labbe).

one dared to insinuate a doubt respecting their authority. Towards the end of the tenth century, Gerbert (who was afterwards pope) did express his doubts on this matter: but yet, even in the French Church, the bishops assembled in council at Rheims, A. D. 992, made use of the Decretals as of a document above all suspicion; and other councils (forgetful of their own rights and interests) did the same. They were afterwards admitted into the collections of ecclesiastical laws made by Regino, Burchard of Worms, and Ivo of Chartres, about the eleventh century; and subsequently by Gratian, who in the twelfth century eclipsed all other canonists. Gratian admitted many of these Decretals into his collection, or employed passages from them in corrupting genuine canons and passages from the fathers, and thus did much towards consolidating the false system. During the middle ages, some voices were from time to time raised against the Decretals, either as a whole, or as to some of the Epistles in particular. In 1087, the Cardinal Deusdedit granted that some objections which had been raised against the pretended Epistles of Clement to the apostle James appeared to him to be insuperable. In the twelfth century, the genuineness of the said Epistles was called in question by Peter Comestor in his 'Historia Scholastica;' and the same was done by several writers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Erasmus subsequently declared against them. But the Magdeburg Centuriators were the first by whom their want of genuineness was proved.

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